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About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

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Evaluating the Al-Qa`ida Threat to the U.S. Homeland

By Philip Mudd



IN THE NINE years since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the counterterrorism campaign in the United States has changed remarkably. In the initial years after 9/11, the primary counterterrorism concern was the presence of more al-Qa`ida-directed terrorists on U.S. soil. Focus was concentrated on preventing a weapon of mass destruction strike, a second coordinated mass transit attack, or a cell directed against a different infrastructure target. As time passed, the United States was able to avoid another al-Qa`ida-directed attack on U.S. soil as a result of good counterterrorism work, combined with a lack of capacity on the part of al-Qa`ida's central leadership.

Nevertheless, in recent years the United States has faced plots from individuals in Texas, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina and other states. In contrast to the 19 hijackers on 9/11,

however, many of the recent terrorist plotters are U.S.-born Muslims or converts, with few, if any, links to al-Qa`ida's central leadership. Al-Qa`ida's revolutionary message, starting with the group's inception more than two decades ago and manifest in its 1998 *fatwa* against the United States, has clearly reached U.S. shores. Although al-Qa`ida is often viewed strictly operationally, its use of terrorism is only a tactic and the group's primary mission is to inspire a much broader movement of affiliated organizations and like-minded individuals to see the United States as the main target for attack. For al-Qa`ida, the purpose of the 9/11 attacks was not only to cause a massive loss of life, but to show the world that the United States is vulnerable. By revealing U.S. weakness, al-Qa`ida hoped to inspire more attacks, causing the United States to reduce its support for governments across the Islamic world. This reduction

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in support would theoretically reduce the capabilities of “corrupt” regimes in Muslim countries and unleash a wave of Islamist revolutions.

This article reviews al-Qa`ida’s present threat to the U.S. homeland. It looks at the evolution of the threat from 9/11—including the rise of affiliated organizations and independent actors—and the problems faced by al-Qa`ida’s central organization in orchestrating attacks in the United States.

Current Threat Pattern

Core Threat

Despite rising threats from groups outside al-Qa`ida’s core leadership, the risk from al-Qa`ida central persists. The recent case of Najibullah Zazi and his plot against New York City’s subway system clearly shows that al-Qa`ida’s core leadership, despite substantial losses, remains intent on striking critical infrastructure—especially transportation—in U.S. population centers.¹ Even in the case of centrally directed plots, the threat has morphed. First of all, judging from recent plots, it does not appear that al-Qa`ida is planning attacks as sophisticated as the 9/11 events. Second, in cases where individuals are directly tied to al-Qa`ida’s central leadership, they are not typically directed out from the center of action (Pakistan/Afghanistan), but are instead drawn into it. Once they are drawn in, they receive training from al-Qa`ida operatives before being sent on a terrorist operation. Zazi, for example, was a legal resident of the United States, and it was not until 2008 that he conspired with others in New York to travel to Afghanistan to fight with the Taliban.² It was only after he arrived in Pakistan that he came into contact with al-Qa`ida recruiters, who then moved him through training camps.³ Cases such

as Zazi’s—where individuals with no previous contact with al-Qa`ida seek out terrorist operatives on their own accord—show how al-Qa`ida’s revolutionary ideology has spread globally.

Affiliates

Al-Qa`ida central now has a number of affiliated organizations that maintain links to the core leadership, yet largely operate on their own. These affiliates include al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI), Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan

“The rise of the ideologically inspired means that even as the strategic threat from al-Qa`ida declines, the number of people absorbing the ideology has broadened the threat, both operationally and geographically.”

(TTP), among others. A significant question for the counterterrorism community is whether members of the affiliate network will use time and safe havens—in locations such as Yemen, the Horn of Africa, or the Sahel—to generate new plots.

During the past year, the ripple effect of these affiliates’ absorption of al-Qa`ida’s emphasis on the “far enemy” (the United States) can be seen. First, the case of David Coleman Headley, a Pakistani-American, reveals an “A-level” plotter who operated in the United States. Headley was involved with plotting attacks for Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LT, or LeT), a South Asian terrorist group that has at least some ties to al-Qa`ida. Headley, who was born in Washington, D.C. and most recently lived in Chicago, was arrested in October 2009 in the

weapons. During the training, al-Qaeda leaders asked Zazi and others to return to the United States and conduct suicide operations. They agreed. Zazi later received additional training from al-Qaeda on constructing the explosives for the planned attacks in the United States.”

United States for involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks and for plotting against employees of a newspaper in Copenhagen, Denmark.⁴

Second, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who studied at a university in London, attempted to detonate explosives on a Northwest Airlines commercial aircraft just outside Detroit on December 25, 2009.⁵ Subsequent investigations revealed that al-Qa`ida’s Yemen affiliate, AQAP, was behind the plot, showing its intent and capability to direct operations within the United States.⁶

Third, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) sponsored Faisal Shahzad, a Pakistani-American who lived in Connecticut, to undertake an attack in New York City’s Times Square on May 1, 2010. In July, video footage emerged of Faisal Shahzad embracing Hakimullah Mehsud, the leader of the TTP.⁷ Pakistan’s interior minister, Rehman Malik, told reporters that Shahzad “visited Pakistan seven times and he met Hakimullah Mehsud and also met other people, those so-called leaders of the Taliban.”⁸

These incidents represent three operatives from al-Qa`ida affiliates, none directed by al-Qa`ida’s central leadership yet all operating in either the United States or the United Kingdom.

Like-Minded

There has also been a surge in the third prong of plotters who represent the spread of al-Qa`ida’s ideology from the core group and its affiliates to new recruits who are inspired but not trained by the group. These represent unaffiliated “like-mindeds,” individuals or clusters of individuals on U.S. soil. Like-mindeds have played significant roles in the al-Qa`ida revolution elsewhere; the numbers of solitary foreign fighters crossing from Syria into Iraq earlier this decade are evidence, similar to the arrival of foreign fighters in Chechnya, Bosnia, Somalia,

1 For details on the Najibullah Zazi case, see “Najibullah Zazi Pleads Guilty to Conspiracy to Use Explosives Against Persons or Property in U.S., Conspiracy to Murder Abroad and Providing Material Support to Al-Qaeda,” press release, U.S. Department of Justice, February 22, 2010.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, “Although Zazi and others initially intended to fight on behalf of the Taliban, they were recruited by al-Qaeda shortly after arriving in Peshawar. Al-Qaeda personnel transported Zazi and others to the Waziristan region of Pakistan and trained them on several different kinds of

4 Andrew Stern, “David Headley Pleads Guilty in Mumbai Attack, Danish Plot,” Reuters, March 19, 2010.

5 “Video Shows Christmas Day Bomber Abdulmutallab,” CBS/Associated Press, April 27, 2010.

6 Ibid.

7 “Pakistan Acknowledges Faisal Shahzad Met Taliban Chief,” Dawn, July 26, 2010.

8 Ibid.

and elsewhere. There is now a similar phenomenon of individuals signing up for the cause in Texas (Hosam Smadi), Illinois (Michael Finton), and New Jersey (the Fort Dix plot).

Broadened Threat

The rise of the ideologically inspired means that even as the strategic threat from al-Qa`ida declines—the likelihood of a 9/11-style attack has dropped markedly as a result of security operations worldwide—the number of people absorbing the ideology has broadened the threat, both operationally and geographically. As the core group suffers—and perhaps eventually dies off—the broader movement is alive and well, and the sheer numbers of like-mindeds suggest that one of the plots in the United States will succeed. Indeed, both the Abdulmutallab and Shahzad plots only failed due to mistakes made creating or detonating the explosive devices.

These affiliates and like-mindeds are harder to target with classic intelligence techniques than a centrally directed organization, and the geographic breadth and frequency of plots during the past two years are clear indicators of how far the revolutionary message has spread. The sophistication of the attackers will not reach what was witnessed nine years ago, but if the goal of the organization is continued recruitment—proving to potential donors and recruits that “al-Qa`idaism” remains relevant—a strike on the scale of the London transit attack in 2005 would be significant to their cause.

The proven presence of plotters from affiliated groups—LT, AQAP, or the Pakistani Taliban—during the past two years is perhaps the most significant evolution of the threat faced during this period. The Detroit airliner and Times Square attempts represent a rare and significant step by an ideological affiliate of al-Qa`ida to show intent and capability to reach into the United States, the first time an affiliate has succeeded since 9/11. Meanwhile, as LT targeting indicates its slow move into al-Qa`ida’s ideological orbit, Headley’s ability to operate in the United States underscores that group’s capabilities should it decide to attack within U.S. borders.⁹

⁹ During LT’s attacks in Mumbai in November 2008, the

The emergence of affiliated groups—candidates might extend as far afield as AQIM or Southeast Asian remnants of Jemaah Islamiya—means that security services that might have previously focused on Pakistan’s tribal areas as the center of training and plotting for attackers headed to Europe and North America must now assume that these emergent groups are conducting similar training, with a focus on the American heartland. The breadth of sophisticated, resource-intensive intelligence operations will have to grow. Trained operatives from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region will not be the sole, or even primary, source of bombing suspects.

In the midst of global economic pressures, Middle East tensions, Russia’s re-emergence, the rise of China and India, and energy debates, the global scope of the al-Qa`ida revolutionary

“The accruing numbers of operational players eliminated, coupled with a pace of operations during the past few years that has prevented the group from finding its feet, represents the most significant damage brought to al-Qa`ida to date.”

creep requires that security services, despite diversions, will have to maintain focus on the jihadist problem. Recent plots have implicated potential terrorists as far afield as North Carolina, New Jersey, Colorado, New York, Missouri, Virginia, Minnesota, Illinois, and Connecticut. All of these plots have involved overseas activities that require the assistance of foreign security services from Western Europe through the Balkans to Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. Maintenance of the informal web of security service cooperation is labor intensive, and it grows more difficult as countries turn

group targeted Westerners, a change in the group’s previous targeting pattern.

to new problems or threats. It will also remain expensive for the United States to conduct intelligence, law enforcement, diplomatic, and military operations in these countries, as well as to support foreign governments with money, training, technology, and equipment to maintain the counterterrorism fight.

Successes

The years of this counterterrorism campaign have clearly improved the security capabilities of the many countries that are working tactical threat problems regularly. Domestic and international operations against terrorists are far more efficient and effective than they were when security services first escalated activities after 9/11. One of the unwritten success stories of the counterterrorism campaign in the United States is the evolution of threat management from inefficient coordination nine years ago to smooth processes today. Time, effort, resources, and practice have combined to make the United States better and safer. The same holds true overseas, from Indonesia to the United Kingdom.

The pace of operations against the central organization has heavily damaged its capability to plan long-term plots from a safe haven. Measuring the impact of every operational takedown is not productive. Yet the accruing numbers of operational players eliminated, coupled with a pace of operations during the past few years that has prevented the group from finding its feet, represents the most significant damage brought to al-Qa`ida to date. Maintaining this pace of operations over subsequent years would eventually cripple the core group.

The ideological missteps of the group and its affiliates since 9/11 have been more notable than its operational setbacks. Jihadists viewed the failures of the 1990s in Algeria and Egypt as the foundation for the evolution in thinking that led al-Qa`ida to argue that until the United States and other powers left the region, regimes would be able to weather the Islamist surge. The post-9/11 attacks, though, have been marked by the same alienation of local populations across the Islamic world that Algeria and Egypt experienced during the strife there. Attacks in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and elsewhere resulted in declines in

support for the al-Qa`ida organization, its leadership, and the use of suicide bombing as a tactic.¹⁰

The organization is aware of its missteps but seems unable to control them. The now well-publicized intercepted exchanges between Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi had the second-in-charge of al-Qa`ida warning his affiliate in Iraq to focus away from local casualties, a warning al-Zarqawi ignored.¹¹ Moreover, in 2008 al-Zawahiri publicly, in an internet session, chose as the first question to answer a request by a writer from Algeria to explain the justification for al-Qa`ida attacks that killed Muslims. Clearly, al-Qa`ida's thinkers, with now 20 years of experience in alienating populations in the countries they recruit and raise funds, understand that indiscriminate killings are undermining the spread of the very revolution they want to propagate. Yet they continue to do just that.

The debate about the killing of innocents has had a ripple effect on propagandists who have influence in the United States. Anwar al-`Awlaqi, the Yemeni-American cleric who has been implicated in a number of recent terrorist plots, supported the killing of military personnel at Fort Hood in 2009, as he did the attempted bombing of an airliner that landed in Detroit.¹² Yet in the latter case, he said that it would have been better had the target been military. Faisal Shahzad, too, obliquely referred to the debate about the killing of innocents in a quote attributed to him after his capture, suggesting that lower-level echelons of the movement are well aware that their killings have raised serious questions among scholars and potential recruits far down the ideological food chain.¹³

10 For details, see Juliana Menasce Horowitz, "Declining Support for bin Laden and Suicide Bombing," Pew Research Center, September 10, 2009.

11 "Letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, July 9, 2005.

12 Patrick Goodenough, "Alleged Fort Hood Gunman a Hero, Says Islamic Cleric With Suspected 9/11 Links," CNSNews.com, November 9, 2009; "Abdulmutallab: Cleric Told Me to Bomb Jet," CBS/Associated Press, February 5, 2010.

13 AOL News, May 17, 2010.

Current State

Today, the United States is experiencing continued al-Qa`ida plotting, coupled with threats from individuals and affiliated organizations that now target the U.S. homeland. The spread of the al-Qa`ida message in the United States was inevitable, and the range of plotters today matches the expansion of the movement elsewhere in the world, beyond individuals trained in Waziristan.

Yet the corrosive effect of al-Qa`ida's murder of so many innocents, including Muslim civilians, suggests that these plots are emerging even as the movement itself suffers, perhaps irreparably, from its own missteps. The United States will face attacks from affiliates and like-mindeds—the sheer volume of discrete plots makes a successful strike inevitable—but one strike will not herald the expansion of the movement, nor should it suggest that the counterterrorism campaign is losing ground. If anything, how the U.S. counterterrorism community responds to these strikes will play the most significant role in whether the movement's credibility continues to decline.

Nine years into this campaign, the core organization appears to be struggling; its followers, while dispersed and dangerous, are facing more questions about their tactics. Patience is the key. As the nine year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks approaches, the United States is safer and the jihadist ideological wave has crested. Unfortunately, it will be years before those who believe in al-Qa`ida's message finally die off.

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The Growing Danger from Radical Islamist Groups in the United States

By Paul Cruickshank

HOMEGROWN TERRORISM IS on the rise in the United States. During the last 15 months, there have been 23 cases of Americans and permanent U.S. residents—some 56 individuals in all—implicated in terrorist plots inspired or directed by al-Qa`ida and its affiliates.¹ This article argues that a significant reason behind this surge in incidents is the presence of Islamist groups openly and legally propagating extreme Islamist ideology in the United States.²

An emerging network of radical preachers, demagogues, bloggers, and activists are attempting to disseminate extremist ideas among Muslim youth in the United States. Largely excluded from the country's mosques, they spread their message on the streets, outside the mosque, in small gatherings in private residences, on campuses and above all online, taking full advantage of new social media platforms to maximize their reach. They are a loose constellation of individuals, but have a clear center of gravity in two extremist groups that

1 This tally by the author includes all public announcements between May 15, 2009 and August 15, 2010 of terrorism charges filed in the United States or overseas against U.S. citizens and permanent residents. It also includes the case of Samir Khan, a North Carolina resident, who is suspected of having linked up with al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen in October 2009. Khan has not been charged.

2 Groups such as ITS and RM that openly promote a radical ideology are of course just one of the concerns of counterterrorism officials tackling homegrown extremism. Many of those charged with terrorist activity in the United States have stayed clear of groups such as RM and ITS to keep themselves off the radar screens of counterterrorism agencies. Such "off-the grid" radicals are the ones of most concern to U.S. counterterrorism officials. Young Americans are being exposed to radical messages in a variety of ways. Some have swapped online messages with radical clerics in the Middle East, such as Anwar al-`Awlaqi. Many have accessed radical propaganda directly from a wide variety of anonymously-run pro-al-Qa`ida websites. Much of it is more extreme than any of the postings on the ITS or RM sites. Yet the fact that ITS and RM have proselytized openly has arguably given them more power and reach than those doing so anonymously. Those interacting on social media sites presumably like to know with whom they are talking.

operate freely and openly in New York City.³

The groups in question—the Islamic Thinkers Society (ITS) and Revolution Muslim (RM), both affiliated with the British extremist organization al-Muhajiroun—are increasingly appearing in counterterrorism investigations.⁴ In June 2010, two New Jersey men linked to the groups were arrested on their way to New York's John F. Kennedy airport, allegedly to fight with the Somali terrorist group al-Shabab.⁵ In July, Virginia resident Zachary Chesser, a prolific RM blogger, was arrested for allegedly planning to do the same.⁶ Also in July it emerged that Samir Khan, who is from North Carolina and has close links to both groups, was suspected of being the driving force behind a new online English-language terrorism magazine called *Inspire*.⁷ In August, yet another link emerged when Shaker Masri, a Chicago resident who claimed to know Chesser, was arrested on his way to allegedly fight jihad in Somalia.⁸

Although the leaders of ITS and RM are not suspected of operational involvement in any terrorist plots, a significant correlation has emerged between participation in the activities of these groups and U.S. homegrown terrorism. Seven of the 23 terrorism cases involving U.S. citizens and residents to emerge in the last 15 months have seen links between the suspects and these radical New York groups, suggesting that ITS and RM have contributed to Americans being radicalized toward violence. No such correlation exists for any other Islamist group openly operating in the

United States. This article will chart how the New York groups emerged, briefly profile their leaders, and explain the danger they now pose.

Catching the British Disease

According to U.S. counterterrorism officials, growing numbers of Americans are espousing violent Islamist views.⁹ The United States, some analysts believe, is beginning to repeat the experience of the United Kingdom a decade ago.¹⁰ In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a group of radical Islamist clerics—including the quartet of Egyptian cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri, Syrian preacher Omar Bakri Mohammed, Jordanian firebrand Abu Qatada, and Jamaican extremist Abdullah al-Faisal—helped radicalize a generation of British youth, creating the largest concentration of pro-al-Qa'ida extremists in the West.¹¹

For a variety of factors, such as better integration into mainstream society, American Muslims have been more resistant to such messages.¹² Yet recent polling data and the growing number of terrorism cases in the United States suggest that not all are immune.¹³ As in every Western country, individuals who feel alienated and frustrated are more susceptible to radical ideologies. Even though those alienated constitute a smaller minority in the United States than in some European countries, their numbers are not insignificant in a population of more than two million American Muslims.¹⁴ ITS and RM appear to be aggressively targeting this disaffected demographic, contributing toward growing radicalization in the United States.¹⁵

Most followers of these groups are so-called second and third generation Muslims or converts.¹⁶ As in Europe, some of the children of Muslim immigrants have struggled for identity and purpose in the United States, making them vulnerable to radical preachers. The same has applied with

9 For example, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano stated in a December 2009 interview that violent Islamist extremism was assumed to be a growing phenomenon in the United States. See "Napolitano: Homegrown Threats a Reality," CNN, May 14, 2010. Additionally, in a February 2010 interview, Mitch Silber, the NYPD's director of intelligence analysis, stated, "Radicalization is definitely on the rise in the United States." See Paul Cruickshank and Nic Robertson, "Analysis: The Spread of U.S. Homegrown Terrorism," CNN, May 13, 2010. That same month U.S. intelligence agencies said that they were concerned that inspirational supporters of al-Qa'ida, such as Anwar al-'Awlaqi, "will increasingly motivate individuals toward violent extremism [in the United States]." See Dennis C. Blair, "Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," February 2, 2010.

10 Personal interview, U.S. counterterrorism official, July 2010.

11 The differing experiences of Britain and France illustrate the key role played by on-the-ground radicalizers in the emergence of radicalism. While there is arguably a higher level of socio-economic frustration and political-cultural alienation among French Muslims than their UK counterparts, there are lower levels of radicalism in France than across the English Channel, according to European counterterrorism officials. The reason is that there have been fewer radical clerics present to take advantage of such sentiment in France because of a long-standing zero-tolerance attitude by French authorities to such preachers because of the threat of attacks from Algerian terrorist groups. Until the July 7, 2005 London bombings, the United Kingdom by contrast allowed radical preachers to operate relatively freely on their soil, judging that they did not pose a threat to British national security. See Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "Clerical Error: The Dangers of Tolerance," *The New Republic*, August 8, 2005.

12 These factors include the high skill level of many Muslim immigrants, their relative economic success, the peaceful form of Islam being preached in nearly all American mosques and the melting pot culture of the United States.

13 "Muslim Americans," Pew Research Center, May 22, 2007. See also Paul Cruickshank, "The Domestic Terror Threat," *Newsweek*, November 20, 2009.

14 There are an estimated 2.4 million Muslims living in the United Kingdom (3.9% of the total population). See Richard Kerbaj, "Muslim Population 'Rising Ten Times Faster than Rest of Society,'" *Times*, January 30, 2009. While there are no official statistics, the Pew organization estimates that there are 2.35 million Muslims living in the United States (0.8% of the total population). See "Muslim Americans." Some studies estimate the U.S. Muslim population to be as high as seven million.

15 This observation is based on the author's own investigations into the activities of ITS and RM, biographical data assembled on their followers, and interviews with U.S. counterterrorism officials. Such groups can provide validation for individuals who have become self-radicalized by exposure to jihadist websites.

16 According to the NYPD, "the Islamic Thinkers Society (ITS) is an organization primarily composed of 2nd and 3rd generation college-age Americans of South Asian and Middle Eastern descent." See Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, "Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat," NYPD Intelligence Division, 2007. The author has also observed a significant number of converts at rallies organized by ITS and RM, an organization whose two founders were themselves converts.

new converts because of their natural zeal and lack of grounding in the tenets of their religion.¹⁷ The nature of those following groups such as ITS and RM was reflected in a 2007 Pew Research Center poll that found American-born Muslims twice as likely to support al-Qa`ida than those foreign-born.¹⁸ According to Pew, seven percent of U.S.-born Muslims held a “favorable” view of al-Qa`ida in 2007, compared with only three percent of foreign-born Muslims.

Al-Muhajiroun America

If the United States is catching this British disease, UK radical preachers helped spread the contagion. In the United Kingdom, one group in particular—al-Muhajiroun, a pro-al-Qa`ida group founded by Omar Bakri Mohammed in 1996—stood out because of the size of its following.¹⁹ In crowded meeting halls across the United Kingdom, Omar Bakri Mohammed and his deputy Anjem Choudary found a formula for attracting hundreds of followers: speak in English with charisma about how the United States and its allies were at war with Islam.²⁰

17 For example, John Walker Lindh, the so-called “American Taliban,” became radicalized soon after converting to Islam. Others that followed the same trajectory include Richard Reid, the so-called “Shoe Bomber,” London subway bomber Germaine Lindsay, American al-Qa`ida operative Bryant Neal Vinas, and American al-Qa`ida spokesman Adam Gadahn.

18 “Muslim Americans.”

19 Al-Muhajiroun, which has operated under a variety of different names in the United Kingdom such as al-Ghurabaa and the Saved Sect, most recently operated under the name Islam4UK before reverting back to its original name after Islam4UK was banned in January under counterterrorism laws. For background on al-Muhajiroun, see Dominic Casciani, “Profile: Islam4UK,” BBC, January 5, 2010.

20 Al-Muhajiroun instructs followers to live their lives according to fundamentalist Salafist principles, completely rejecting Western values. It has also openly championed the al-Qa`ida terrorist organization and Usama bin Laden, depicting them as waging a legitimate jihad against an oppressive West. The organization, however, has constructed a novel theological construct to oppose attacks by Western Muslims inside their own countries. They argue that citizenship creates a “covenant of security” preventing such attacks. Several plots in the United Kingdom, however, have been linked to one-time members of al-Muhajiroun.

It was an approach the group successfully transplanted to the United States. Until the late 1990s, most pockets of extremism in the United States had been associated with Arabic-speaking clerics such as `Umar `Abd al-Rahman, the “blind shaykh,” who in the early 1990s briefly took over the al-Farooq mosque in Brooklyn. The year before 9/11, Choudary traveled to New York and the Midwest to build up al-Muhajiroun’s fledgling American wing.²¹ In the years that followed, al-Muhajiroun established a significant presence in the New York area, especially in the boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn, helping to make al-Qa`ida’s ideology accessible to second generation Muslims and converts who could not speak languages such as Arabic and Urdu. “Ten years ago we were in the early stages, there were not many ideological movements at the time in America as you find in Britain,” said Choudary. “They weren’t really talking about foreign policy, they weren’t really coming out openly, publicly and engaging in ideological and political struggle, whereas I think they are now.”²²

Al-Muhajiroun’s New York members held demonstrations and organized speaking events.²³ For some, however, mere protest was not enough. In the United Kingdom and the United States,

21 The radical Islamist group Hizb al-Tahrir had by the end of the 1990s also established a presence in the United States, and today has a significant following, particularly in the Midwest, New York, and California. Most observers regard it as significantly less radical than al-Muhajiroun. Hizb al-Tahrir has stated it opposes al-Qa`ida terrorism and violence at this time. See personal interview, senior Hizb al-Tahrir representative, London, January 2005. See also Madeleine Gruen, “Hizb ut Tahrir’s Activities in the United States,” *Terrorism Monitor* 5:16 (2007).

22 Nic Robertson, CNN interview with Anjem Choudary, London, November 2009. Segments of the interview aired on “Anderson Cooper 360” on November 11, 2009 as part of a series of reports on homegrown terrorism this author helped set up and produce.

23 In May 2002, for example, al-Muhajiroun organized a meeting at Brooklyn College in which they showed videos of atrocities they claimed had been committed against Muslims around the world. “America is directly involved in exterminating Muslims,” one of its members, Syed Hashmi, subsequently convicted of aiding al-Qa`ida, declared at the meeting. “America is the biggest terrorist threat in the world.” For details, see Michael Elliott et al., “Al Qaeda Now,” *Time Magazine*, June 3, 2002.

al-Muhajiroun followers became wrapped up in counterterrorism investigations. Two of its active members in New York—Syed Hashmi and Mohammed Junaid Babar—were subsequently convicted of aiding al-Qa`ida.²⁴ After his arrest in 2004, Babar admitted to having met with al-Qa`ida commanders along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and to having organized terrorist training, sponsored by al-Qa`ida, for a group of one-time British al-Muhajiroun followers in Pakistan.²⁵ He was also connected to a number of British militants spread across Pakistan, including a cluster of al-Muhajiroun followers in Lahore, who helped facilitate travel to the region for aspiring jihadists from the United Kingdom.²⁶ Two British suicide bombers who attacked a Tel Aviv nightclub in April 2003 were also followers of the group.²⁷

The Islamic Thinkers Society

In August 2004, al-Muhajiroun followers in New York launched a new organization called the Islamic Thinkers Society.²⁸ After Bakri Mohammed

24 Anemona Hartocollis and Al Baker, “U.S. Citizen is Accused of Helping Al Qaeda,” *New York Times*, June 8, 2006.

25 In April 2010, Syed Hashmi pleaded guilty in a New York court to aiding al-Qa`ida. In the summer of 2006, he was arrested boarding a flight at Heathrow Airport transporting all-weather equipment for the terrorist group in Pakistan and was subsequently extradited to the United States. See Kiran Khalid, “U.S. Citizen Gets 15 Year Sentence for Helping Al Qaeda,” CNN, June 10, 2010. A second New York al-Muhajiroun follower—Mohammed Junaid Babar—pleaded guilty in 2004 to providing material support to al-Qa`ida. The previous year Babar had organized a training camp for a group of young British militants in Pakistan plotting to blow up targets in London with fertilizer bombs. The terrorist cell, whose plans were foiled by the British police investigation “Operation Crevice,” were themselves one-time followers of al-Muhajiroun in the United Kingdom. See Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, “Al Qaeda on Thames,” *Washington Post*, April 30, 2007. Al-Muhajiroun’s deputy leader Choudary knew both Hashmi and Babar, getting to know the latter on one of his trips to New York. This is based on personal interview, Anjem Choudary, October 2009.

26 See Paul Cruickshank, “The Militant Pipeline between the Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Region and the West,” New America Foundation, February 2010; Dominic Casciani, “Path to Extremism: How it Started,” BBC, May 3, 2007.

27 Bergen and Cruickshank, “Clerical Error: The Dangers of Tolerance.”

28 Personal interview, U.S. counterterrorism official, September 2009. In its first posting on its website, the

temporarily instructed followers to cease using the name al-Muhajiroun in 2004,²⁹ ITS became the main standard bearer for the group's ideology in the United States.³⁰

Although ITS claims on their website that "our struggle is always intellectual & political non-violent means," counterterrorism officials have taken a more sanguine view. "In a sense they are almost bug lights for aspiring jihadists," New York Police Department (NYPD) Director of Intelligence Analysis Mitch Silber told CNN in an interview earlier this year. "They've got an anti-Western, anti-democratic, anti-U.S., pro Al Qaeda message."³¹ While the group has few full-time members, and its rallies are sometimes sparsely attended, its YouTube channel and Facebook page have around 200 subscribers each. The number of people viewing these sites is likely significantly larger since many presumably browse the content anonymously.³²

Unlike their counterparts in the United Kingdom, most of the leaders of ITS have been careful not to reveal their real names, often using aliases in interviews.³³ Yet one figure within the

group announced: "Our *da'wah* (preaching) activities takes place mainly in the streets of Times Square and Jackson Heights, NYC where we give out leaflets and hold posters/banners covering all types of issues relating from spiritual, social, economical, to political issues. Our objective is to bring back the apparatus that was destroyed in 1924 i.e. Khilafah [caliphate]."

²⁹ Bakri Mohammed claimed to be disbanding al-Muhajiroun because the existence of specific groups could create factionalism at a time when all Muslims needed to resist "evil forces" in the West. See Faisal al-Yafai, "Monitored Islamist Group Shuts Down," *Guardian*, October 13, 2004.

³⁰ The ITS praised al-Muhajiroun leader Omar Bakri Mohammed in postings on its website. Al-Muhajiroun deputy leader Anjem Choudary stated that the two groups are closely affiliated. See personal interview, Anjem Choudary, October 2009.

³¹ Cruickshank and Robertson, "Analysis: The Spread of U.S. Homegrown Terrorism."

³² As of August 2010, the ITS YouTube site had 178 subscribers and its Facebook page had 232 members.

³³ In May 2010, two of the "administrators" listed on ITS' Facebook page were Abu Mujaddid and Muhammed Nussrah. Mujaddid is the name adopted by the group's spokesman, who the author interviewed for CNN after an ITS protest outside the Israeli Consulate in New York in April 2010, at which Mujaddid was the main speaker. See Cruickshank and Robertson, "Analysis: The Spread

group—Yousef al-Khattab, a Jewish convert to Islam from New Jersey—built up a considerable public profile. Al-Khattab converted to Islam in 1999 while living in an Israeli settlement in Palestine after becoming disillusioned with Orthodox Jewish teachings.³⁴ Al-Khattab, according to his own account, moved back to the United States from the Middle East in 2006 and thereafter split his time between Morocco, where his wife and children lived, and New York City.³⁵ According to U.S. counterterrorism officials, by 2007 al-Khattab had established himself as the front man of ITS.³⁶

A number of individuals in his U.S. circle were subsequently implicated in terrorism cases. By al-Khattab's own account, he struck friendships with two Americans who were later charged with terrorism offenses. One was Tarek Mehanna, a Boston resident charged in 2009 with plotting to blow up shopping malls in the United States,³⁷ and the other was Mehanna's associate Daniel Maldonado, a Texas resident who was convicted in 2007 of training with a Somali militant group.³⁸ Al-Khattab also met with Bryant Neal Vinas, a Long Island Catholic convert to Islam, shortly before Vinas left the United States in September 2007 to wage jihad against U.S. troops in Afghanistan.³⁹ Vinas subsequently joined al-Qa`ida and

of U.S. Homegrown Terrorism." In press reports, Nussarah has been identified as a Brooklyn resident, but it is unclear if that is his real name. See Tarek el-Tablawy, "Woman Leads Muslim Prayer Service in NYC," Associated Press, March 19, 2005. For a report on the early activity of ITS, see Andrea Elliott, "Queens Muslim Group Says it Opposes Violence, and America," *New York Times*, June 22, 2005.

³⁴ Yousef al-Khattab, "The Journey of the Al Khattab Family to Islam," www.yousefalkhattab.com, undated.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Cruickshank and Lister, "Arrested Men Attended Protests Organized by Radical Islamic Group."

³⁷ Ibid. Mehanna has not entered a plea.

³⁸ Drew Griffin, Kathleen Johnston, and Paul Cruickshank, "Peaceful Preaching Inside, Violent Message Outside a New York Mosque," CNN, November 5, 2009. Maldonado had joined forces with Alabama resident Omar Hammami in trying to connect with jihadists in Somalia. Hammami is believed to be still at large fighting with the group in Somalia. See Andrea Elliott, "The Jihadist Next Door," *New York Times*, January 27, 2010.

³⁹ Michael Powell, "U.S. Recruit Reveals How Qaeda Trains Foreigners," *New York Times*, July 23, 2009.

helped the terrorist group plot an attack against the Long Island Railroad in New York.⁴⁰ Al-Khattab has stated that he had no idea of Vinas' plans.⁴¹ In the years before setting off for jihad, Vinas associated with ITS circles in New York City, attending several meetings held by the group; counterterrorism officials say this contributed to his radicalization.⁴² Yet at a certain point, according to U.S. counterterrorism officials, Vinas became frustrated that the group was "all talk and no action," indicating that the leadership of the ITS stopped short of directly calling on followers to fight jihad.⁴³ He was far from the only example of an individual following such a trajectory, say those officials.⁴⁴

Despite his frustrations, it was within his circle of friends at ITS that Vinas found the connections needed to join up with militants in Pakistan. Two of his friends within the ITS in New York had advance knowledge of his plans, according to officials.⁴⁵ One of them, Ahmer Qayyum, coordinated his own travel plans with Vinas and arrived shortly after him in Lahore. Once there, Qayyum helped Vinas connect with jihadists targeting U.S. troops in Afghanistan, according to counterterrorism officials.⁴⁶

Revolution Muslim

In 2008, Yousef al-Khattab co-founded RM with Younes Abdullah Muhammad, a convert and one-time member of ITS with a degree in international affairs from Columbia University.⁴⁷ RM was

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Paul Cruickshank, Nic Robertson and Ken Shiffman, "The Radicalization of an All-American Kid," CNN, May 15, 2010.

⁴² Ibid.; "American Al Qaeda," CNN documentary, May 15, 2010.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ In an interview with CNN for the CNN documentary "American Al Qaeda," NYPD Director of Intelligence Analysis Mitch Silber stated "the pattern that we see is a lot of these individuals that are attracted to the bug light at a certain point realize that these groups are just talkers. They're not going to do more than just demonstrate. They're not going to do more than just put out extreme statements. And those who are serious about the jihad will leave these groups." See also Paul Cruickshank and Tim Lister, "Alleged American Jihadists: Connecting the Dots," CNN, August 2, 2010.

⁴⁵ Cruickshank, Robertson and Shiffman.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Personal interviews, Yousef al-Khattab and Younes

more provocative and extreme than ITS, delighting in confronting mainstream Muslims outside mosques⁴⁸ and courting controversy in the national media.⁴⁹ While the ITS propagates the ideology of Omar Bakri Mohammed, the spiritual guide of RM is Jamaican cleric Abdullah al-Faisal, many of whose speeches are posted on the RM YouTube channel.⁵⁰ RM has also endorsed and posted many of the writings of American-Yemeni cleric Anwar al-'Awlaqi on its site.

Like the ITS, the number of fully committed RM members is small, perhaps consisting of a dozen regulars who consistently show up to events. Most of RM's activities are conducted online, taking full advantage of the growing power of social media. The group maintains a website and blog that they claim receives more than 1,500 hits a day, mostly from Americans.⁵¹ Additionally, they hold regular question-and-answer sessions with

Abdullah Muhammad, New York, October 2009.

48 On many Fridays, members of the group would stand outside mosques after prayers and chastise Muslims for not supporting jihad. "We call you to reject the enemies of Islam and to rally around those who are waging jihad... many of you stay silent sitting here, enjoying the life and the pleasures of this world while your brothers and sisters are slaughtered and attacked in Muslim lands," Younes Abdullah Muhammad exclaimed outside a Manhattan mosque in September 2009.

49 In an interview with CNN in October 2009, al-Khattab and Muhammad made no secret of their radical views. "I love him [Usama bin Laden] like I can't begin to tell you," said al-Khattab, while Younes Abdullah Muhammad stated that U.S. foreign policy justified attacks on Americans, including 9/11. They denied they encouraged individuals to travel to fight jihad overseas and stated they opposed attacks on U.S. soil. Within hours of the Fort Hood shooting in November 2009, however, a posting appeared under al-Khattab's name on the RM website labeling shooter Nidal Hasan "an Officer and a Gentleman." See the documentary "Homegrown Terror," CNN, December 12, 2009, which the author part-produced. Al-Khattab later stated on his blog that he supported that attack because it was a military target. See Yousef al-Khattab, "Why I left Revolution Muslim," www.yousefalkhattab.com, June 13, 2010.

50 Al-Faisal, one of the UK clerics who helped radicalize a generation of British youth, was banned from the United Kingdom after the July 7, 2005 London bombings. Al-Faisal's sermons had radicalized Germaine Lindsay, one of the suicide bombers in the attack. RM leader Muhammad claims he is a close acquaintance of al-Faisal's. See "Profile: Germaine Lindsay," BBC, May 11, 2006.

51 Personal interviews, Yousef al-Khattab and Younes Abdullah Muhammad, New York, October 2009.

followers over the interactive online communication site PalTalk. They also operate a YouTube channel with almost 1,000 subscribers, on which they post videos and interact online with followers. Many subscribers maintain their own elaborate YouTube channels, creating an interlocking online universe of radical sites. According to terrorism expert Marc Sageman, a former scholar in residence at the NYPD, the interactive nature of such sites is a more important driver of radicalization than just watching jihadist videos: "It's really discussing their [the videos] significance with your friends, that in a sense drives the point home, as opposed to just watching them."⁵² One of the followers of RM's YouTube channel was a recent convert to Islam from Pennsylvania, Colleen LaRose, who subscribed to the channel under the avatar "Jihad Jane."⁵³ In March 2010, LaRose was charged with plotting to assassinate a Swedish cartoonist due to the latter's depictions of the Prophet Muhammad.⁵⁴

In November 2009, al-Khattab left the United States for Morocco, and in January 2010 al-Khattab announced that he had quit RM.⁵⁵ In an interview with the author, he complained that Younes Muhammad was taking the group in a more radical direction than had been the case when he was leading it.⁵⁶ "RM at that time was NOT Salafi Jihadi and that was not the platform I wanted," al-Khattab subsequently claimed in an online posting.⁵⁷ Younes Muhammad now leads the group.

52 Nic Robertson, "Terrorists Use YouTube," CNN, December 22, 2009. The report was produced by this author.

53 Cruickshank and Lister, "Arrested Men Attended Protests Organized by Radical Islamic Group."

54 Ibid.

55 With Muhammad away on a trip to Saudi Arabia, al-Khattab left a young protégé, Abdullah as Sayf Jones, a convert to Islam from Florida, in charge of the group. This did not please Muhammad who, according to al-Khattab's account, took back control of the group on his return and forced Jones out. See Al-Khattab, "Why I Left Revolution Muslim." See also "Backgrounder: Revolution Muslim - Abdullah as Sayf Jones," Anti-Defamation League, June 30, 2010.

56 Personal interview, Yousef al-Khattab, February 2010.

57 Al-Khattab posted this as part of an exchange on the Islamic Awakening Forum between July 23-July 25, 2010 under the heading "Feds Arrest Man Behind 'South Park' Threats."

Links to Recent Terrorism Cases

In March 2009, ITS and RM participated in an anti-war rally in front of the White House. Among their ranks were two individuals who would soon be arrested and charged with planning to join the Somali terrorist group al-Shabab. One was Mohammed Alessa, a New Jersey resident who together with associate Carlos Almonte was arrested on his way to JFK airport in June 2010. According to counterterrorism officials, during the previous two years Alessa and Almonte had attended a number of rallies organized by ITS and RM.⁵⁸ The other was Zachary Chessler, a Virginia resident who converted to Islam in 2008, quickly became radicalized, and took an increasingly lead role in the online activities of RM.⁵⁹ A few weeks after the rally in Washington, Chessler posted a warning that the creators of the South Park television show risked being assassinated for their portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad in a bear suit, a warning that was widely viewed as a threat. In July, Chessler was arrested after he revealed to an FBI agent his intention to fight in Somalia.⁶⁰

Chessler's arrest prompted an extraordinary online clash between RM's two founders. In a series of postings on an online Islamic forum in late July, al-Khattab appeared to imply that his former colleague Younes Abdullah Muhammad had encouraged Chessler to leave to fight jihad.⁶¹ "The purpose [of my post] was to clearly state that Muslim brothers should stay away from my former group and any group that shares the same theology," al-Khattab stated. "I would retire and go on with your life Younes, leave the *fatawa* and life planning to the Uulemah [sic] before you destroy yourself and others."⁶² In a response on the same forum, Younes Abdullah Muhammad lashed out against his former friend. "Essentially you are trying to play a role in my arrest as an incitor [sic],"

58 Personal interviews, U.S. counterterrorism officials, July 2010.

59 U.S.A. v. Zachary Adam Chessler; Personal interview, U.S. counterterrorism official, July 2010.

60 Cruickshank and Lister, "Alleged American Jihadists: Connecting the Dots."

61 The exchange took place on the Islamic Awakening Forum between July 23-July 25, 2010 under the heading "Feds Arrest Man Behind 'South Park' Threats."

62 Ibid.

Muhammad said. "I emailed you and explained that you had no evidence that I have ever incited or told people to commit acts of violence."⁶³ Muhammad claimed that Chesser had actually grown frustrated with the relative moderation of the group's platform:

Truth be told, I had many conversations with Abu Talha [Chess] about the platform for spreading Islam. He felt that some of what I was saying was passive to a degree and moved on. I have not been in contact with him for several months and he has not been participating on RM since the South Park Affair, yet you insinuate that I am recorded inciting the brother.⁶⁴

Another American linked to ITS and RM implicated in terrorism this summer was Samir Khan, a radical blogger previously resident in North Carolina but now believed to be in Yemen. In July 2010, it emerged that he was the suspected driving force behind *Inspire* magazine, a new online publication by al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula that included do-it-yourself bomb-making instructions, threats against U.S. citizens and a clarion call for volunteers for jihad.⁶⁵ According to counterterrorism officials, Khan first became radicalized while he was living in New York, during which time he attended several ITS meetings.⁶⁶ Khan, according to the officials, also had links to the leaders of RM.⁶⁷ Illustrating the web of links between radical extremists across the United States, in September 2009 Khan introduced Zachary Chesser as a new contributor to *Jihad Recollections*, one of the blogs he authored in North Carolina.⁶⁸

In early August 2010, U.S. authorities charged yet another American who had links to RM with terrorism offenses. Shaker Masri, a Chicago resident who claimed to be an associate of RM blogger Chesser, was arrested as he allegedly prepared to leave the United States to

fight jihad with the al-Shabab terrorist organization in Somalia. Masri allegedly told an undercover FBI informant that he wished to become a suicide bomber. According to the complaint against him, Masri told the informant that he personally knew Chesser, but would not repeat the mistake that he thought led to Chesser's arrest—communicating directly with al-Shabab.⁶⁹

Growing Dangers

The ITS and RM are still active on New York streets. In April 2010, ITS held a protest rally against Israeli actions in Palestine outside the Israeli Consulate in New York. After the rally, the group's spokesman, Abu Mujaddid, told the author that they plan to step up their activities in New York and were successfully recruiting new followers. Mujaddid refused to provide his real name.⁷⁰

In recent months, RM's website has featured a prominent link to the "Authentic Tawheed" room on PalTalk on its homepage. The channel, administered from Jamaica by Abdullah al-Faisal, contains regular talks from a variety of English-speaking radical preachers. On July 31, the channel organized a special "global online conference" entitled "Take Over Washington," featuring Abdullah al-Faisal, Omar Bakri Mohammed, Anjem Choudary, and Younes Abdullah Muhammad. The event was directed in particular to Muslims living in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. In his address, Bakri Mohammed urged listeners to resist the "Crusaders" led by the United States "verbally, financially or physically if you can."⁷¹

How dangerous are ITS and RM? While the majority of those involved in the groups are not implicated in terrorist activity, the growing tally of terrorism cases linked to them should raise concern. Radical-leaning young American Muslims who become followers of such groups—either online or in person—find an echo chamber for their views and a powerful sense of shared community and purpose. Yet because of strong freedom of speech protections in the United States, there is little that counterterrorism officials can do about such groups if they limit their activities to proselytizing.⁷² "As much as the Islamic Thinkers Society might put out an extremist message, it seems they go right up to the line of the first amendment, for the most part they, themselves as a group aren't acting," said Mitch Silber, the director of intelligence analysis at the NYPD.

Charismatic radical preachers such as Younes Abdullah Muhammad may not explicitly encourage individuals to fight jihad, but they whip up anger among followers by portraying the United States as engaged in a murderous war against Muslims. Counterterrorism experts believe that such rhetoric makes groups such as ITS and RM dangerous. According to Sageman, "Even if they do not have the connections to help [young radicals] go further, they articulate the glory of fighting jihad, the glory of doing something, of being active and this very much inspires young people."⁷³

The extent to which radical groups operating in the United States have connections to militant groups overseas is of crucial concern to U.S. counterterrorism officials. Officials do not believe a facilitation network has emerged in the United States for aspiring jihadists seeking to fight or train overseas on anything like the scale of the United Kingdom. There is concern, however, that a recruiting bridge may develop between American radicals who have joined jihadist groups overseas, such as North Carolina blogger Samir

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Cruickshank, "US Citizen Believed to be Writing for Pro Al Qaeda Website Source Says."

⁶⁶ Cruickshank and Lister, "Alleged American Jihadists: Connecting the Dots."

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Apart from that conversation, the FBI stated that it had "no other knowledge, at this time, of any direct contact between Chesser and Masri." Masri was charged with trying to provide material support to two terrorist organizations—al-Qa`ida and al-Shabab—and with another charge related to weapons of mass destruction, according to the criminal complaint. See *U.S.A. v. Shaker Masri*.

⁷⁰ Cruickshank and Robertson, "Analysis: The Spread of U.S. Homegrown Terrorism."

⁷¹ "Take Over Washington Conference," Authentic Tawheed Room PalTalk, July 31, 2010.

⁷² Anjem Choudary told this author in October 2009 that his radical comrades in the United States could say comments that he could not in the United Kingdom because of new laws passed in the United Kingdom in 2006 against glorifying terrorism.

⁷³ Cruickshank and Lister, "Arrested Men Attended Protests Organized by Radical Islamic Group."

Khan, and their former radical circle in the United States.⁷⁴

U.S. counterterrorism officials hope they can prevent the American equivalent of the “British Jihadi Network” from emerging during the next several years.⁷⁵ Yet U.S. officials are under no illusions that trends seen in the United Kingdom are crossing the Atlantic. Although groups such as ITS and RM have fewer full-fledged members than their British equivalents, new social media platforms are allowing them to spread their message more widely than would have been possible a decade ago. According to Choudary, the deputy leader of the UK radical group al-Muhajiroun, groups such as his in the United States are only “five or ten years behind in terms of the struggle they are engaging in.”⁷⁶

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Manchester, New York and Oslo: Three Centrally Directed Al-Qa`ida Plots

By Raffaello Pantucci

ON JULY 7, 2010, the U.S. Department of Justice unsealed fresh charges against a group of foreign and U.S. nationals that it claimed were at the heart of an al-Qa`ida conspiracy to attack New York and Manchester, England. A day later in Norway, prosecutors announced charges against a cell of individuals who they claimed were also part of the same conspiracy and were plotting an attack in Scandinavia. Allegedly planned and directed by senior al-Qa`ida figures as part of a series of operational cells dispatched at around the same time, the plots highlight the group’s persistent ability to train individuals and then send them to carry out attacks in the West.

Using recently released information linked to the three separate, but centrally directed plots in Manchester, New York and Oslo, this article will explore al-Qa`ida’s persistent ability to plot in Pakistan’s badlands in the face of increased pressure from U.S. and Pakistani forces. It will highlight the group’s ongoing ability to attract and train foreigners, and its focus on soft targets in the West. Finally, it will examine the increasing globalization of the network, with its apparent ability to utilize individuals linked to other extremist groups based in Pakistan’s tribal areas.

The three plots do not appear to be the only elements drawn to al-Qa`ida’s camps during 2008. American al-Qa`ida plotter Bryant Neal Vinas and a network of plotters around Malika el-Aroud, a Belgian-Moroccan who was the wife of one of Ahmad Shah Massoud’s killers, both appear to have been connected to the same radical networks. Vinas provided information to American and European investigators showing the growing importance of Rashid Rauf as an al-Qa`ida plotter.¹

This article, however, focuses on the aspiring jihadists in Manchester, New York and Oslo, who trained in Pakistan and then headed back to their respective target countries where they launched preparations to carry out attacks using hydrogen peroxide-based devices. According to American and British court documents, as well as quotes from officials in Norway, the plots were directed and coordinated by senior al-Qa`ida figures Salah al-Somali, Rashid Rauf and Adnan Shukrijumah. Key individuals in all three cells were apparently present in the same parts of Pakistan in November 2008.² There may indeed be other plots that will prove to be linked in the same way, but they have not been publicly unmasked yet.

The Manchester Plot

In April 2009, British authorities foiled a plot allegedly involving suicide attacks on soft targets in Manchester. The specifics of the initial tip-off are unclear. One story claimed the evidence came from a jihadist who was helping security service investigators in Belgium in late 2008.³ Another said the information first came to MI5 in 2009 referring to an al-Qa`ida cell in northwest England. Codenamed Operation Pathway, the investigation launched in February that year was focused on British-Pakistani national Hamza Khan Shenwari of Cheetham Hill, Manchester.⁴ According to his lawyers, Shenwari is a 42-year-old Pashtu speaker who worked as a security guard and came to England in 2000 seeking asylum following mistreatment at the hands of the Taliban.⁵

The investigation uncovered evidence of what security services believed was a large cell of some 12 individuals with links to al-Qa`ida in Pakistan. Key

74 Personal interviews, U.S. counterterrorism officials, 2009-2010.

75 British authorities in 2007 stated that they were monitoring around 2,000 individuals who posed a risk to national security and 30 active plots. See Frank Gardner, “MI5 Watch 2000 Terror Suspects,” BBC, May 2, 2007.

The number has not dropped appreciably since.

76 Nic Robertson, CNN interview with Anjem Choudary, London, November 2009. Segments of the interview aired on “Anderson Cooper 360” on November 11, 2009 as part of a series of reports on homegrown terrorism this author helped set up and produce.

1 Paul Cruickshank, “The 2008 Belgium Cell and FATA’s Terrorist Pipeline,” *CTC Sentinel* 2:4 (2009); Paul Cruickshank and Nic Robertson, “Recruits Reveal Al Qaeda’s Sprawling Web,” CNN, July 30, 2009.

2 “Charges Unsealed Against Five Alleged Members of Al Qaeda Plot to Attack the United States and United Kingdom,” U.S. Department of Justice, July 7, 2010; “3 Arrested in Norway Al Qaeda Bombing Plot,” Associated Press, July 8, 2010.

3 David Leppard, Kevin Dowling, Philip Cardy and Daud Khattak, “Ghost in the Machine,” *Sunday Times*, April 12, 2009.

4 Duncan Gardham and Gordon Rayner, “A Plot for Mass Murder Here and in the US,” *Daily Telegraph*, May 19, 2010.

5 Jonathan Brown, Robert Verkaik and Kim Sengupta, “Police and PM in Dock Over Arrest of Terrorist Suspects,” *Independent*, April 23, 2009.

among these was Shenwari's roommate, Abid Naseer, a 24-year-old Pakistani national from Peshawar who first came to the United Kingdom in 2006.⁶ Naseer arrived in the United Kingdom ostensibly to study at Liverpool John Moores University, having worked in Peshawar at the university's representative office there. It was here that he met some of the men who were subsequently to stand accused with him,

“Despite persistent declarations of al-Qa`ida’s demise, the uncovering of this network highlights the group’s ongoing ability to generate plots in the face of increased pressure from drone strikes and Pakistani government efforts in its lawless regions.”

including Tariq ur Rehman, a 39-year-old widower from Miran Shah in North Waziristan Agency. Rehman first came to the United Kingdom in September 2007, also to attend a course at the John Moores University.⁷

Neither man spent much time in their university courses, dropping out almost immediately after their arrivals to later sign up for English-language courses at the Manchester College of Professional Services, described by courts as “an institution with a dubious reputation.”⁸ Instead, they appear to have spent their time wandering around taking pictures of themselves in front of local shopping malls and docks.⁹ It is unclear exactly when these pictures were taken, but it would appear as though it was before Rehman and Naseer separately

⁶ *Abid Naseer, Ahmad Faraz Khan, Shoaib Khan, Abdul Wahab Khan and Tariq ur Rehman v. Secretary of State for the Home Department*, Special Immigration Appeals Commission, May 18, 2010.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Sultan Sher, Mohammed Umar Farooq, Mohammed Rizwan Sharif v. Greater Manchester Police*, City of Westminster Magistrates, July 21, 2010.

went back to Pakistan in September–November 2008, meeting up twice in Peshawar while there.¹⁰

Prior to returning to the United Kingdom, Naseer opened an e-mail account under the name humaonion@yahoo.com on November 14, 2008, which 16 days later started receiving e-mails from the account sana_pakhtana@yahoo.com.¹¹ This account was opened by an individual known only as “Ahmad” who was using it to pass messages from Salah al-Somali, referred to as al-Qa`ida’s then-chief of external operations.¹²

By the time British investigators started to uncover the network in February 2009, Naseer appeared to have progressed far down the path of preparation. E-mail traffic between the two accounts showed Naseer discussing a complex list of possible girlfriends—which security services interpreted as discussion of bomb ingredients—while investigators noted with alarm that Shenwari was working at a hair products company, giving him easy access to peroxide products.¹³ He was also in contact with a network of Pakistani nationals in Liverpool and Manchester, at least some of whom were later assessed to be knowing conspirators.¹⁴

Security concerns reached a fever pitch on April 3, 2009, when an e-mail was intercepted from Naseer’s account to “Ahmad” that was believed to state that an attack was being prepared between April 15–20. Authorities decided to arrest the men a few days later, although the final action was rushed forward by a few hours after Assistant Commissioner Bob Quick of the Metropolitan Police was caught on camera entering 10 Downing Street displaying documents related to the plot.¹⁵ Police arrested 12

¹⁰ *Abid Naseer, Ahmad Faraz Khan, Shoaib Khan, Abdul Wahab Khan and Tariq ur Rehman v. Secretary of State for the Home Department*.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² “Charges Unsealed Against Five Alleged Members of Al Qaeda Plot to Attack the United States and United Kingdom.”

¹³ Lord Carlile of Berriew, “Operation Pathway: Report Following Review,” October 2009.

¹⁴ *Abid Naseer, Ahmad Faraz Khan, Shoaib Khan, Abdul Wahab Khan and Tariq ur Rehman v. Secretary of State for the Home Department*.

¹⁵ Lord Carlile of Berriew.

individuals, although they were unable to locate any evidence of explosives or collection of materials beyond “large amounts of flour and oil.”¹⁶ Furthermore, in addition to the photos of sites in Liverpool and Manchester, detailed maps of Manchester city center were found with the same sites highlighted. Mobile phones and surveillance footage of the different groups of plotters also tied the arrested men together to varying degrees.¹⁷

The evidence, however, proved inconclusive and the courts decided that the men could not be prosecuted, turning them either free or over to immigration authorities. Security services and the courts remain convinced that Abid Naseer “was an Al Qaeda operative who posed and still poses a serious threat.”¹⁸ Yet while the media focused on the public relations disaster that followed, security officials concentrated on ascertaining Naseer’s contacts in Pakistan. Sometime later, they noticed activity from the account linked to “Ahmad” to a 24-year-old Pashtun-American named Najibullah Zazi.¹⁹ Zazi and Naseer were both in contact with the same individual through this e-mail account and discussed the topic of marriages in similar terms.²⁰ Reports in the British press suggest that this was the tip-off that alerted U.S. authorities to Zazi’s activities, although this detail has not been officially confirmed.²¹

The New York Subway Plot

According to documents released in July 2010, Najibullah Zazi and two high school friends, Zarein Ahmedzay, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Afghanistan, and Adis Medunjanin, a Bosnian-born naturalized U.S. citizen, flew from New York through Doha to

¹⁶ “Charges Unsealed Against Five Alleged Members of Al Qaeda Plot to Attack the United States and United Kingdom.”

¹⁷ *Sultan Sher, Mohammed Umar Farooq, Mohammed Rizwan Sharif v. Greater Manchester Police*.

¹⁸ *Abid Naseer, Ahmad Faraz Khan, Shoaib Khan, Abdul Wahab Khan and Tariq ur Rehman v. Secretary of State for the Home Department*.

¹⁹ “Charges Unsealed Against Five Alleged Members of Al Qaeda Plot to Attack the United States and United Kingdom.”

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “British Spies Help Prevent Al Qaeda-inspired Attack on New York Subway,” *Telegraph*, November 9, 2009.

Peshawar on August 28, 2008.²² Once in Pakistan they established contact with "Ahmad" who took the men to Waziristan where they could receive military training.²³ At the training camp they met with individuals who were later identified as Salah al-Somali and Rashid Rauf, who urged the men to consider going back to the United States to carry out attacks rather than fight in Afghanistan.²⁴ They are said to have also met Adnan Shukrijumah, and the al-Qa`ida leaders recruited the men to carry out attacks on the New York subway.²⁵

The three Americans left Waziristan soon afterward, with Medunjanin flying back to the United States on September 22, while the other two stayed to receive explosives training. In November 2008, however, "Ahmad" brought only Zazi to a training camp in Waziristan where he was trained in explosives.²⁶ It was during this period that he likely drafted notes on how to fabricate Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP) using flour, oil, hydrogen peroxide and acetone, which he e-mailed to himself in early December 2008 and which were later used as evidence against him.²⁷ Ahmedzay later admitted to reviewing Zazi's notes.²⁸

Having completed their time in Pakistan, Zazi returned to the United States on January 15, 2009, with Ahmedzay following on January 22. Zazi moved to Aurora, Colorado soon after this, while Ahmedzay and Medunjanin remained in New York. In Colorado, Zazi and unidentified others located the sources of the necessary ingredients to produce TATP, and he experimented with the ingredients in a hotel room he rented in Aurora.²⁹ During spring and summer of 2009, he made at least two trips to

²² U.S.A. v. *Adis Medunjanin, Abid Naseer, Adnan el Shukrijumah, Tariq ur Rehman, FNU LNU, and Name Redacted*, Eastern District of New York, 2010.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Zarein Ahmedzay Pleads Guilty to Terror Violations in Connection with Al Qaeda New York Subway Plot," U.S. Department of Justice, April 23, 2010.

²⁵ U.S.A. v. *Adis Medunjanin, Abid Naseer, Adnan el Shukrijumah, Tariq ur Rehman, FNU LNU, and Name Redacted*.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ U.S.A. v. *Najibullah Zazi*, Eastern District of New York, 2009.

²⁸ "Zarein Ahmedzay Pleads Guilty to Terror Violations in Connection with Al Qaeda New York Subway Plot."

²⁹ U.S.A. v. *Najibullah Zazi*.

New York where he discussed with Ahmedzay how he was proceeding with making the TATP, and they agreed to carry out suicide attacks on the New York subway system on September 14, 15, and 16.³⁰ As they got closer to the time of attack, Zazi attempted repeatedly to make contact with

"The al-Qa`ida narrative continues to draw in a wide community of individuals across ethnic lines and from around the globe."

unknown individuals trying to confirm the exact measurements required to assemble the explosives.³¹ At some point he also made contact with "Ahmad," this time using a code referring to the timing of a wedding that was similar to that which British services had noted in Abid Naseer's e-mails.³²

Zazi was picked up by police in mid-September 2009 and pled guilty to training and plotting to attack the New York subway. Recognizing that the noose was closing, Medunjanin seems to have lost control, and on January 7, 2010 called 911 from his mobile phone telling the operator "we love death" before crashing his car on the Whitestone Expressway in Queens, New York.³³ He survived, and the next day both Ahmedzay and Medunjanin were indicted for seeking to fight abroad. In April, Ahmedzay confessed his role in the subway plot, while Medunjanin continues to plead his innocence.

The Oslo Plotters

The final plot from this network was disrupted in Oslo, Norway in July 2010, the day after the indictment officially linking the New York and Manchester plots was unsealed.³⁴ Whether the

³⁰ "Zarein Ahmedzay Pleads Guilty to Terror Violations in Connection with Al Qaeda New York Subway Plot."

³¹ U.S.A. v. *Najibullah Zazi*.

³² "Charges Unsealed Against Five Alleged Members of Al Qaeda Plot to Attack the United States and United Kingdom."

³³ U.S.A. v. *Adis Medunjanin, Abid Naseer, Adnan el Shukrijumah, Tariq ur Rehman, FNU LNU, and Name Redacted*.

³⁴ The author is grateful to Anne Stenersen of FFI for

prosecution's hand was forced by the indictments published the day before in the United States, other American pressure or the fact that the Associated Press had discovered the investigation, police felt they had to move in and arrest two men in Oslo: Mikael Davud, a 39-year-old ethnic Uighur with Norwegian citizenship, and David Jakobsen, a 31-year-old Uzbek with legal residency in Norway. At the same time, German police arrested a third man, Shawan Sadek Saeed Bujak, a 37-year-old Iraqi-Kurd who was on holiday in Duisburg, Germany.

Norwegian and U.S. officials were quoted in the press as saying that the men had been under surveillance for just over a year and the belief was that the plot was directed by Salah al-Somali.³⁵ As Petter Nesser and Brynjar Lia identify, it seems as though this cell was "one node" in a wave of attacks directed by al-Qa`ida at the West.³⁶

The central figure in the Norwegian plot, Mikael Davud, was apparently in Waziristan at around the same time as Najibullah Zazi, although it is unclear that he trained at the same camp.³⁷ Officials in Norway believe the men were linked to the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), a primarily China-oriented extremist group based in Waziristan that has in the past called for attacks on China and which is often confused with the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM).³⁸

As with most information connected to either group, the details are murky. The strongest connections between Davud and terrorist groups, however, flow through TIP; apparently TIP commander Seyfullah called Davud's phone number in September 2008.³⁹ Furthermore, Davud was in possession of a passport photograph of missing British extremist Ibrahim Adam (brother of convicted

helping with research into the Oslo group.

³⁵ Gwladys Fouche and Joachim Dagenborg, "Norway Arrests Al Qaeda-Linked Suspects Over Plot," Reuters, July 8, 2010.

³⁶ Petter Nesser and Brynjar Lia, "Lessons Learned from the July 2010 Norwegian Terrorist Plot," *CTC Sentinel* 3:8 (2010).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Edward Wong, "Chinese Separatists Tied to Norway Bomb Plot," *New York Times*, July 9, 2010.

³⁹ Lia and Nesser.

Crevice plotter Anthony Garcia), which Davud claimed he had received from an acquaintance in Turkey in 2009.⁴⁰ The connections between the terrorist group and the other two are instead unclear and clouded by the fact that the Uzbek suspect, David Jakobsen, had worked as an informant since November 2009. Jakobsen claimed that he had contacted the police after he realized what he was involved in and had met with them on a weekly basis since first providing them with information.⁴¹ Police doubt his authenticity, highlighting the fact that he failed to inform them that he had purchased a quantity of hydrogen peroxide in furtherance of the plot.⁴²

The plotters went quiet in the period running up to the arrests, but police claim Davud accumulated enough explosives and other materials to construct a large device or several small devices (they had in fact already swapped what he thought was hydrogen peroxide with an inert substance). Their exact target is unclear, although there is speculation that the oil industry was being targeted when it was revealed that Jakobsen had applied for a place at a school which trained people for jobs in the oil industry.⁴³

Al-Qa`ida's Core Persists

There are a few key analytical points to be drawn from this series of plots. First, it appears that al-Qa`ida continues to maintain a capacity to train individuals from its base in Pakistan's tribal areas despite being under pressure. Faisal Shahzad, the attempted Times Square bomber, made his way to Peshawar in July 2009, apparently tracking a path similar to Zazi's network. This shows that as of a year ago, despite drone strikes operating at full tempo, the route and capacity to train in the region had not been closed down.

Second, the al-Qa`ida narrative continues to draw in a wide community of individuals across ethnic lines and from around the globe. While the Manchester plot was driven by recent arrivals to the United Kingdom who

were predominantly from Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Uighur Davud had lived in Norway since 1999 and Zazi and his cell had all attended high school together in the United States. Also, while less successful in their attempts at plotting in the West, Vinas and the cell around Malika el-Aroud show the ideology's reach to converts and the North African diaspora in continental Europe. The cross-cultural appeal is equally visible in the growing roster of young Westerners being drawn to al-Shabab's jihad in Somalia. Furthermore, the possible link to TIP highlights the group's ability to draw upon networks fostered by "sister" extremist groups operating in Pakistan's tribal areas.

Finally, the plotters' persistence is worth noting. While it is unclear (and unlikely) that the three plots knew of each other (though it seems likely that some information on them may have come from interrogations of other terrorist camp graduates), they nevertheless continued plotting in the face of news that their leaders in Waziristan had been killed and information was leaking out about their network. Despite persistent declarations of al-Qa`ida's demise, the uncovering of this network highlights the group's ongoing ability to generate plots in the face of increased pressure from drone strikes and Pakistani government efforts in its lawless regions.

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Lessons Learned from the July 2010 Norwegian Terrorist Plot

By Petter Nesser and Brynjar Lia

ON JULY 8, 2010, the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST) announced the arrests of three men, suspected of having formed an al-Qa`ida-linked terrorist cell and planning bomb attacks against what were later presumed to be Chinese targets in Norway.¹ The cell is believed to be "one node" in a far-reaching al-Qa`ida network that planned attacks in multiple countries, including the New York subway plot led by Najibullah Zazi and the conspiracy to bomb shopping malls in Manchester, both foiled in 2009.² The alleged leader of the Norwegian cell, Mikael Davud, a 39-year-old Norwegian citizen of Chinese Uighur origin, was reportedly trained in Waziristan and is suspected of having entertained direct contacts with the commander of the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), as well as top al-Qa`ida personnel, such as Salah al-Somali, al-Qa`ida's former head of external operations who was killed in late 2009.³ According to U.S. officials, al-Somali ordered all three attacks, and all cells planned to use the same type of portable homemade bombs.⁴ Also, the Federal Bureau of Investigation believes that Adnan Shukrijumah, considered al-Qa`ida's new head of external operations, is probably connected to the Norway plot.⁵

¹ "Tre personer pågrepet," Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste, July 8, 2010.

² Scott Shane and Eric Schmitt, "Norway Announces Three Arrests in Terrorist Plot," *New York Times*, July 8, 2010; Kristoffer Rønneberg, "Terrorplaner i Oslo, London og New York kobles sammen," *Aftenposten*, July 8, 2010; Harald Berg Sævereid, "Han tytset om norsk terrorcelle," *Verdens Gang*, July 9, 2010.

³ Yassin Musharbash, "Festgenommene Qaida-Verdächtige Norwegisches Terror-Puzzle," *Der Spiegel*, July 8, 2010; Jonas Sverrisson Rasch and Gunnar Hultgreen, "Terrorgruppe tilhørte uigurisk separatistgruppe," *Dagbladet*, July 8, 2010; "Davuds mobilnummer funnet hos uigurtopp," *Dagbladet*, August 2, 2010.

⁴ Bruce Crumley, "Norway's al-Qaeda Arrests: Terrorism's Changing Face," *Time Magazine*, July 8, 2010.

⁵ "Ny al-Qaida-topp kobles til terrorplaner i Norge," *Aftenposten*, August 6, 2010; Curt Anderson, "New al-Qaida Leader Knows US Well," *Associated Press*, August 6, 2010.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ "Norway: Al Qaeda Bomb Suspect Was Police Informant," *Associated Press*, July 12, 2010.

⁴² "Norwegian Police Secretly Filmed Terror Suspect: Report," *Agence France-Presse*, July 10, 2010.

⁴³ Ibid.

From a counterterrorism perspective, the Norway cell is an interesting case study in several regards. First, it provides arguments to both sides in the Sageman-Hoffman dispute over whether the al-Qa`ida threat is becoming more “homegrown,” “de-centralized,” and “Europeanized,”⁶ or whether al-Qa`ida has retained the ability to direct terrorist operations in Europe and elsewhere.⁷ Second, it also casts light on two observable trends in jihadist terrorism during the past few years: (i) the expanding role of al-Qa`ida’s regional branches and affiliated organizations in international terrorism; (ii) the growing multiethnic composition of jihadist cells and networks in Europe, where overwhelmingly Arab and Pakistani networks have been gradually replaced by more multinational cells. Third, the Norway cell may suggest a new emphasis in al-Qa`ida on targeting “the periphery” in the Western world, whereby the threat level in Norway may gradually converge toward that of the United Kingdom and continental Europe. Finally, the current investigation of the alleged terrorist cell in Oslo has demonstrated the continued difficulties of handling terrorism-related criminal offenses in Scandinavia where the justice systems only recently started to adapt to the new reality of transnational terrorist organizations, and where U.S. pressure to act more aggressively clashes with a deep commitment to prevention strategies and high standards of legal protection.⁸

This article will outline the details of the Norway plot and the investigation, and it will discuss the sociology of the alleged cell and possible motives. It concludes with a few remarks on the preliminary lessons learned and the implications of the plot.

6 See, for example, Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

7 See, for example, Bruce Hoffman, “The Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism,” *Foreign Affairs* 87:3 (2008): pp. 133-138.

8 See, for example, Michael Jonsson and Christian N. Larson, “Scandinavian Trials Demonstrate Difficulty of Obtaining Terrorist Financing Convictions,” *Terrorism Monitor* 7:5 (2009); Ian MacDougall, “Norway al-Qaida Case Highlights Terror Strategy,” Associated Press, July 16, 2010. Also see the entries about Norway in the U.S. Department of State’s “Patterns of Global Terrorism” for 2007 to 2009.

The Plot and the Investigation

On July 8, 2010, three men of Uighur, Uzbek and Iraqi-Kurdish descent were arrested on terrorism charges after a one year investigation involving extensive international cooperation. The ongoing investigation reportedly included electronic room surveillance, wiretapping, GPS and radio tracking, secret searches of apartments and

“From al-Qa`ida’s perspective, Norway maintains a close military alliance with the United States, has a historical, deep-rooted friendship with Israel and is a significant military contributor in Afghanistan and other fronts in the U.S.-led war on terrorism.”

electronic surveillance of internet traffic. It progressed at different levels of intensity during the past year. The case became more serious in February and March 2010 as the suspects allegedly sought to obtain quantities of chemicals suitable for making peroxide-based high explosives, also used by the 7/7 London bombers as well as by previously intercepted terrorist cells in Denmark and Germany. The amount of chemicals was far smaller, however, than the hundreds of liters acquired by the so-called Sauerland cell in Germany. Nevertheless, it was reportedly sufficient to make one large bomb device or several small ones.⁹ The suspects also procured chemistry masks, gloves, and other types of substances and equipment suitable for bomb-making.¹⁰ Using a technique applied by the British MI5 against a cell in Britain in 2004, the Norwegian police secretly replaced the dangerous chemicals with harmless substances.¹¹

9 “Norge var terrormålet,” *Aftenposten*, July 10, 2010; “Eksplosivene ble ikke oppbevart hos siktede,” *Aftenposten*, July 11, 2010.

10 “Slik ble de avslørt,” *Dagbladet*, July 16, 2010.

11 “Norge var terrormålet.”

In addition to the bomb manufacturing activities, police secured a host of other circumstantial evidence suggesting a terrorist plot, including incriminating e-mail correspondence, phone books, notes and pictures, all indicating ties to international terrorist networks. The investigators found passport photos of Ibrahim Adam, a terrorist suspect wanted by British authorities for his alleged involvement in previous plots in London. One of the cell members claims he was asked to assist in procuring false passports for Adam with a view to bringing him into the country.¹² The cell may also have been involved in money transfers to illegal terrorist organizations.¹³

There is still much uncertainty and confusion surrounding the Norway cell and its intentions. Authorities believe the cell intended to strike a target on Norwegian soil, possibly against Chinese interests. Thus far, however, this assumption appears to rest more on inference and conjecture than actual evidence.¹⁴ The fact that one of the cell members applied twice for a preparatory course at an oil drilling company (although he never showed up) has raised fears that the alleged cell planned attacks against Norway’s vital oil industry; Norway is

12 Amund Bakke Foss, Francis Lundh, and Daniel Pinheiro Harbo, “Terrorsiktet ble bedt om å skaffe falskt pass,” *Verdens Gang*, July 12, 2010; Frode Hansen and Harald S. Klungveit, “Terror-ettersøkte Ibrahim (23) skulle hjelpes inn i Norge med falsk pass,” *Dagbladet*, July 16, 2010.

13 According to U.S. Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Stuart Levey, the U.S. Terrorism Finance Tracking Program (TFTP), which has been accessing all international bank transactions recorded by the Belgium-based company SWIFT until the end of 2009, “provided support to the Norwegian investigation.” Another possible indication is that one of the suspects had registered a private firm from which he withdrew nearly \$600,000 before the firm went bankrupt. The firm’s transactions were considered illegal by experts. See Valentina Pop, “Swift’ Used in Norway’s al Qaeda Sting, US Says,” EUObserver, July 9, 2010; Jarle Brenna, Rolf J. Widerøe, Kari Tone Sperstad, and Amund Bakke Foss, “Terrorsiktet tok ut seks millioner i kontanter,” *Verdens Gang*, July 9, 2010.

14 Harald S. Klungveit et al., “Slik planla de terror på norsk jord,” *Dagbladet*, July 13, 2010; Kari Tone Sperstad, Tom Bakkeli, and Amund Bakke Foss, “PST: - Terrorhandlingen skulle skje på norsk jord,” *Verdens Gang*, July 12, 2010.

among the world's largest oil exporting countries.¹⁵

The investigation of the Norway cell has clearly been influenced by both national and international media. The timing of the arrests was premature and not ideal from an investigation point of view.¹⁶ Officially, the story is that an Associated Press investigation into the global terrorist network, of which the

"If, on the other hand, it is proven that the plotters received direct orders from al-Qa`ida's central command in Pakistan, the case should be interpreted as another sign of al-Qa`ida's success in sustaining an operational capability in the West."

Norway cell was part, forced Norwegian authorities to arrest the suspects.¹⁷ On the other hand, growing U.S. pressure to act decisively against a cell that had links both to the United States and to al-Qa`ida's top command may also explain why the police moved in prematurely.

Following the highly publicized arrests, a steady stream of leaks from sources close to the investigation has fed the national media. Initially, the leaks appeared to strengthen the prosecution's

case, but gradually information more favorable to the defendants has found its way to the newspapers, to a point where the security service chief threatened to have the defendants' lawyers replaced for leaking classified information.¹⁸ Even though the present case looks much stronger than previous terrorism investigations in Norway when the defendants have been acquitted on terrorism charges, many commentators have voiced skepticism about the prospects of a conclusive verdict. Norway's antiterrorism laws require a collective effort, a "conspiracy" of two or more people, which in principle makes it legal for a lone individual to initiate limited preparations for terrorist acts on his/her own.¹⁹ The defense lawyers have had some success in pushing this argument, not the least because it has transpired that one of the defendants had in fact been a police informant since 2009—one of the more intriguing details of the Norway plot. He claims to have alerted the authorities about the passport fraud operation and other issues. He has, however, reportedly admitted that he failed to notify them about the purchase of chemicals.²⁰ Information so far suggests that the cell leader, the Uighur national, was far more involved than the other two, and it remains to be seen if a conspiracy can be proven conclusively.

The Sociology of the Alleged Terrorist Cell

The three cell members are all relatively recent immigrants to Norway. They arrived in the country in the late 1990s or early 2000s, and gradually obtained permanent residency and, in the case of Davud, Norwegian citizenship. Their profiles depart somewhat from the new archetype of homegrown terrorism, in which cell members are young disenfranchised second or third generation immigrants, and are mostly self-radicalized and self-recruited, operating autonomously from any central leadership.

18 "Forsvarer: - PST bør holde kjeft," *Aftenposten*, July 10, 2010; "PST anklager forsvarere for lekkasjer," *Verdens Gang*, August 6, 2010.

19 Per Asle Rustad, "Terrorsiktede kan reddes av norsk lov," *Verdens Gang*, July 21, 2010.

20 Tom Bakkeli et al., "Terrorsiktet har vært informant for PST siden 2009," *Verdens Gang*, July 12, 2010; Lars Akerhaug, Jenny Sandvig, and Lars-Christian U. Talseth, "Var mistenkt - ble informant," *Aftenposten*, July 12, 2010.

Information so far suggests that the cell leader, Mikael Davud, had established contacts with al-Qa`ida back in 2001-2002 and is suspected of having maintained longtime contacts with militant leaders in Waziristan, which he allegedly visited in 2008-2009.²¹ Investigators first came across his name when Seyfullah, the top commander of the Turkistan Islamic Party, reportedly tried to call his mobile number in September 2008.²² Davud had also studied at an Islamic boarding school (*madrasa*) in Karachi during the late 1990s, but did not complete his education for unknown reasons.²³ The two other cell members, the Iraqi-Kurd Shawan Sadek Saeed Bujak (37-years-old) and the Uzbek national David Jakobsen (31-years-old), had apparently been radicalized in Europe. Bujak spent several years seeking asylum in Germany where he reportedly became "more religious."²⁴ Jakobsen, the youngest cell member, adopted radical views after arriving in Norway.²⁵ Leaders of the Uzbek community in Oslo claim they knew about him and had alerted the authorities about militant activism in their community.²⁶

Despite living relatively inconspicuous lives, several of the cell members were involved in various forms of petty crime, such as the smuggling of *halal* meat from Sweden, the purchase of illegal travel documents, and misappropriation of company funds.²⁷ They may also have drawn attention to themselves by the fact that they engaged openly in Islamic activism in the Norwegian towns where they set foot; they made little effort to hide their radical leanings. Bujak headed an Islamic cultural center in Førde, a small town in western Norway and was remembered among his former work colleagues for having voiced

21 Musharbash.

22 "Davuds mobilnummer funnet hos uigurtopp."

23 Davud had obtained permission by Chinese authorities to travel to Pakistan. See Line Brustad, Ida Hanstad and Per Asle Rustad, "Terrorsiktet ville bli imam," *Verdens Gang*, July 17, 2010.

24 Eiliv Frich Flydal and Mikal Hem, "Terrorsiktet hyllet Bin Laden," *Dagbladet*, July 25, 2010.

25 Harald S. Klungtveit et al., "Her pågripes terrorsiktede Shawan (37) av tysk spesialpoliti," *Dagbladet*, July 9, 2010.

26 Ibid.

27 Hans Torgersen et al., "Her drev én av de terrorsiktede kiosk," *Aftenposten*, July 11, 2010.

strong sympathies for al-Qa`ida and Usama bin Laden.²⁸ Davud attended the Muslim Culture Center, a controversial mosque known for its militant views, in the sleepy town of Sarpsborg, southeast of Oslo.²⁹ This is where he got to know Jakobsen.³⁰ Davud also frequented radical milieus in Bergen, where he reportedly met Bujak.³¹

One interesting detail of the Norway cell is the fact that all members changed their names in 2006-2007, following the Prophet Muhammad cartoon crisis. Two of them adopted names that sounded less foreign. Jakobsen's original name was Alisjer Abdulaif and Davud's name was Mohammad Rashidin. They also changed addresses relatively often, presumably to make it more difficult for authorities to keep track of them.³²

Age-wise, the Norway cell also departs slightly from the typical pattern, with all members well into their 30s, and one of them close to 40. Analyses of recent terrorism cases in Europe have hypothesized that there is a trend toward younger militants.³³ The Norway cell is one of several examples contradicting this thesis. Throughout the history of jihadism in Europe, terrorist cells have typically been mentored and led by people in their late 30s, whereas the foot soldiers have been youngsters in their teens or early 20s.³⁴

28 Flydal and Hem; Harald S. Klungtveit and Torgeir P. Krokfjord, "Slik levde de terrorsiktede et dobbeltliv," *Dagbladet*, July 11, 2010.

29 The mosque's imam, Shaikhjami Abdul-Qudus, has preached the death penalty for Muslims converting to Christianity and that Islamic law is above Norwegian law. Reportedly, there have been several conflicts between Muslim communities in Sarpsborg over issues such as suicide bombing and the Iraq war. See Anders Engen Sanden, "Omstridt moské i Sarpsborg," *Aftenposten*, July 12, 2010.

30 Ibid.

31 In spring 2010, another Uighur resident from Bergen was reportedly arrested in Pakistan on terrorism charges. See "Uigur fra Bergen pågrepet i Pakistan," ABCNy-heter.no, July 15, 2010.

32 Klungtveit and Krokfjord.

33 See, for example, Lorenzo Vidino, "The Hofstad Group: The New Face of Terrorist Networks in Europe," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30:7 (2007): pp. 579-592.

34 In fact, young people have only headed terrorist cells in a limited number of cases. See Petter Nesser, *Jihad in Europe: A Survey of the Motivations for Sunni Islamist Terrorism in Post-Millennium Europe* (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2004); "Profile: Omar

The multinational character of the cell is also interesting, as it is consistent with what appears to be an increasingly more important pattern of jihadist terrorism in Europe. Previously dominated by Arabs from North Africa and the Middle East, jihadist networks have grown more diverse, including large numbers of activists from Asia, mainly Pakistan, the Caucasus, and East Africa, as well as European converts. In a growing number of cases, non-Arabs have also assumed important leadership positions. The Germany-based Sauerland-cell in 2007 is a case in point.³⁵ Uighurs, however, have hardly ever figured in jihadist networks in Europe.

Possible Motives

The available information provides few clues about the exact motive for an attack in Norway at this point. If Chinese interests were in fact the target, the ongoing conflict between Uighur separatists and the Chinese government will be seen as the most likely motive, in which case Norway is merely an opportune arena rather than a target. It should not be surprising, however, if it develops that the group sought to strike at Norwegian interests directly. While Norway has not been a priority target for al-Qa`ida in the past, it has been specifically singled out by name in al-Qa`ida speeches, most ominously by Ayman al-Zawahiri in 2003 and 2004, and by Abu Yahya al-Libi in 2006. There are good reasons for this: from al-Qa`ida's perspective, Norway maintains a close military alliance with the United States, has a historical, deep-rooted friendship with Israel and is a significant military contributor in Afghanistan and other fronts in the U.S.-led war on terrorism. Moreover, Norwegian authorities previously imprisoned Mullah Krekar, the infamous

Khyam," BBC, April 30, 2007.

35 See, for example, Guido Steinberg, *The Islamic Jihad Union* (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2008); Simone Kaiser, Marcel Rosenbach and Holger Stark, "Operation Alberich, How the CIA Helped Germany Foil Terror Plot," *Der Spiegel*, September 10, 2007. Also see Morten Skjoldager, *Truslen indefra - De Danske Terrorister* (Copenhagen: Lindhardt og Ringhof, 2009); Petter Nesser, "Lessons Learned from the September 2007 German Terrorist Plot," *CTC Sentinel* 1:4 (2008); Petter Nesser, "Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994-2007: Planned, Prepared, and Executed Terrorist Attacks," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31:10 (2008): pp. 924-946.

founder of the Kurdish-Iraqi terrorist group Ansar al-Islam, and have ordered his deportation. Finally, the publication of the Prophet Muhammad cartoons by a few Norwegian newspapers also added to the country's visibility on jihadist websites, although it was overshadowed by events in neighboring Denmark.

Preliminary Implications and Lessons Learned

Assessments of the wider implications of the Norway cell will necessarily have to take into account its organizational origins and its intended target, key details that still remain murky. If the cell primarily operated on behalf of the Turkistan Islamic Party, targeting Chinese interests internationally, the case may be seen as another example of increased involvement by al-Qa`ida's

"The multinational character of the cell is also interesting, as it is consistent with what appears to be an increasingly more important pattern of jihadist terrorism in Europe."

regional affiliates in international terrorism outside their immediate theater of operation. Other recent examples of this include the role of al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula in the Christmas Day airliner plot in Detroit in 2009, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan's involvement in the Times Square attack in May 2010, and the Islamic Jihad Union's plot in Germany (the Sauerland cell) in September 2007. One may also add the recent assassination attempt on Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard by a Danish-Somali who has been linked to the al-Shabab movement.

If, on the other hand, it is proven that the plotters received direct orders from al-Qa`ida's central command in Pakistan, the case should be interpreted as another sign of al-Qa`ida's success in sustaining an operational capability in the West. Furthermore, the discovery of al-Qa`ida cells in Norway may suggest that the organization seeks to build

a new capability to strike Europe's periphery. Its networks in central Europe have suffered serious setbacks after the disruption of numerous cells in Spain, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Denmark, and it may have pushed al-Qa`ida to seek new opportunities in countries less affected by al-Qa`ida terrorism.

From Norway's perspective, it is important to acknowledge the fact that terrorist cells hardly ever emerge from a vacuum. Terrorist cells need supporters and sympathizers to recruit and operate successfully. Discovery of such cells is usually a strong sign that radicalism and underground extremist networks are on the rise.

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American Journeys to Jihad: U.S. Extremists and Foreign Conflicts During the 1980s and 1990s

By William Rosenau and Sara Daly

VIOLENT EXTREMISM AMONG American Muslims has been the subject of considerable official and analytical attention in the years since the attacks of September 11, 2001. This scrutiny, however, is devoted almost entirely to the post-9/11 period.¹ Particularly neglected has been the subject of American Muslims who traveled to "fields of jihad" in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, and Kashmir during the 1980s and 1990s—a significant gap in knowledge, given plausible claims that hundreds if not thousands of individuals (most, if not all, presumably Muslims) left the United States to join armed struggles abroad during this period. After nearly 10 years of the "global war on terrorism," it is necessary to explore the "pre-history" of contemporary Islamist extremism in the United States. Such an examination can help calibrate the scale of current challenges, design appropriate countermeasures and, ideally, avoid the mistakes of the past as well as the follies of present-mindedness.

This article considers the cases of four Americans—Hiram Torres, Abu Adam Jibreel, Clement Rodney Hampton-El, and Isa Abdullah Ali—who made journeys to foreign jihads before 9/11. Although hundreds if not thousands of Americans may have left the United States for jihad, robust biographical information exists on only a handful of individuals—and even this information is incomplete. For example, little is known, at least publicly, about what networks might have helped these men join foreign struggles. Given these

1 For recent examples, see Rick "Ozzie" Nelson and Ben Bodurian, *A Growing Terrorist Threat? Assessing 'Home-grown' Extremism in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2010); Brian Michael Jenkins, *Would-Be Warriors: Incidents of Jihadist Radicalization in the United States Since September 11, 2001* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2010). An important exception is Lorenzo Vidino, "Homegrown Jihadist Terrorism in the United States: A New and Occasional Phenomenon?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32:1 (2009).

limitations, it is impossible to say with confidence whether or not these four cases are representative. At the very least, however, a consideration of these cases represents a first step toward the goal of creating a fuller picture of violent extremism among American Muslims before 9/11.

Hiram Torres

As a high school student in working-class Perth Amboy, New Jersey, Hiram Torres explored a variety of religions and political creeds and yearned "to be part of a revolution somewhere," one friend, Sachin Timbadia, recalled.² Torres traveled with another friend to Bangladesh in the summer of 1993, returning "a changed person," according to his mother.³ She recalled that he began wrapping sheets around his head like a turban and expressing outrage at the poverty he had witnessed in South Asia.⁴

An excellent student, Torres attended Yale but dropped out in 1993 during his freshman year. "He wanted to be in another country," according to a college roommate, who added that Torres "certainly wasn't violent and he didn't talk about hating America—it just wasn't a place he wanted to live."⁵ Acquaintances said that Torres was not noticeably secretive. Yet in high school he refused to have his picture taken for the high school yearbook because he "wanted to keep a low profile in case something happened in the future," said Timbadia. At Yale, he declined to submit a photo for the freshman face book—suggesting, perhaps, preparation for a new and possibly clandestine existence.⁶

Several months after dropping out of college, Torres returned to Bangladesh and then moved to Pakistan and finally Afghanistan, where he last made contact with his mother in 1998.⁷ Nothing more was heard of Torres until December 2001, when a *New York Times* reporter discovered documents in a house in

2 David Rohde and James Risen, "A Nation Challenged: Another Expatriate," *New York Times*, February 6, 2002.

3 Jocelyn Lippert, "1993 Yale Drop-Out Linked to Al Qaeda," *Yale Daily News*, February 7, 2002.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Rohde and Risen.

Kabul used by Harkat-ul-Mujahidin, a pro-Taliban Pakistani militant group which among other activities had trained John Walker Lindh, the so-called “American Talib” captured as an enemy combatant in November 2001.⁸ Among al-Qa`ida bomb-making manuals and other material was a list of recruits that included Torres’ name and the notation that he was also known as Mohammed Salman.⁹ Torres’ ultimate fate remains unknown.

Abu Adam Jibreel

In 1998, Abu Adam Jibreel, a member of Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LT, or LeT), was killed in Kashmir during operations against Indian security forces. His life was recounted in a hagiographical internet essay written by a fellow jihadist, Abdur-Raheem As-Siddiqi,

“Nearly a decade into the ‘war on terrorism,’ government officials, policy specialists and terrorism scholars still know relatively little about the participation of Americans in violent extremism abroad before 2001.”

who described Abu Adam as the product of a “considerably wealthy family in Atlanta, Georgia” who attended the Ebenezer Baptist Church where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had once served as pastor.¹⁰

A restless spiritual seeker, Abu Adam looked beyond the Baptist creed of his family and spent time at the Atlanta Community Mosque, whose spiritual leader Jamil Abdullah al-Amin (the former Black Panther once known as H. Rap Brown) was serving a prison term for murder.¹¹ As a student at North

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Abdur-Raheem As-Siddiqi, “An American Born Shaheed (Martyr), Abu Adam Jibreel,” May 20, 2001, available at www.albalagh.net/general/abu_adam_jibreel.shtml.

11 Donna Leinwand, “A U.S. Teen’s Journey to Jihad,” *USA Today*, June 14, 2002.

Carolina Central University, Abu Adam converted to Islam. Concerned about the plight of Muslims in Bosnia, Kashmir, and Chechnya, he dropped out of the university and, according to As-Siddiqi, “began to prepare for the journey that most never think about—much less prepare for: jihad.”

In November 1997, after months of spiritual and physical preparation, including training provided by a fellow Muslim who had served with the U.S. Army Rangers, 19-year-old Abu Adam traveled to Kashmir. Abu Adam (known to comrades as “al-Amreekee”) distinguished himself at an LT training camp with his piety, discipline, and modesty. “Our brother was in my view, a true *zaahid* (one who abstains from the glitter of this worldly life),” As-Siddiqi writes.

After four months, Abu Adam completed LT’s commando training course and began preparations “to carefully infiltrate the occupied valley of Kashmir to strike down and destroy the enemies of Allah, the vile Hindus and Sikhs from the Indian army,” according to As-Siddiqi. In July 1997, Abu Adam and his fellow fighters entered into the “occupied valley” and began laying ambushes and carrying out raids against Indian forces. During one “bloody raid on an army post in the Doda sector in the Jammu region,” Abu Adam was killed, but not before killing 17 Indian soldiers, according to As-Siddiqi.

Clement Rodney Hampton-El

Raised in impoverished circumstances, Hampton-El had been a member of the Moorish Science Temple—a predominantly African-American religious sect—before converting to orthodox Sunni Islam and adopting the name Abdul Rashid Abdullah. Hampton-El was also reportedly a member of Jama`at al-Fuqara’,¹² an extremist sect whose U.S. branch was founded in 1980 by Mubarak Ali Shah Gilani, a Pakistani Sufi cleric and supporter of Islamist militancy in Indian-occupied Kashmir. By the late 1980s, Jama`at al-Fuqara’ (also known later as Muslims of the Americas) was allegedly acquiring weapons and recruiting fighters for Afghanistan.¹³

12 Elizabeth Shogren, “Fuqra: A Name for Muslim Terrorism,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 2003.

13 Christopher Heffelfinger, “Evaluating the Terrorist

Hampton-El joined the Afghan jihad, reportedly serving as a medic with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hizb-i-Islami mujahidin force.¹⁴ Wounded by a Russian shell, he returned to New York in late 1988 to recuperate. For Hampton-El, also known as “Dr. Rashid” for his work with the mujahidin and his later employment as a hospital technician,

“Potential terrorist recruits today have more opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals in the United States than prior to 9/11, and there is more ideological and possibly logistical support for conducting domestic terrorist attacks.”

Afghanistan was a transformative experience. “The war was a life-force experience that he dearly wanted to return to...so he could have another chance at martyrdom and paradise,” according to one press account.¹⁵

He never returned to Afghanistan. Instead, he became a significant figure at the al-Kifah Refugee Center in New York, a branch of al-Qa`ida’s international fundraising and support network. During the early 1990s, “Dr. Rashid” trained prospective jihadists and smuggled funds into the United States as part of “Project Bosnia,” an effort to recruit, support and prepare militants for Bosnia.¹⁶ A member of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing conspiracy, Hampton-El was convicted in 1996 with the “blind shaykh,” `Umar `Abd al-Rahman, and others in

Threat Posed by African-American Muslim Groups,” *CTC Sentinel* 1:6 (2008).

14 Jason Burke, “Frankenstein the CIA Created,” *Guardian*, January 17, 1999.

15 Francis X. Clines, “Specter of Terror,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1993.

16 *U.S.A. v. Omar Ahmad Ali Abdul Rabman, et al.*, Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, 1996; Evan Kohlmann, *Al-Qa`ida’s Jihad in Europe: The Afghan-Bosnian Network* (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2004), pp. 73-74.

connection with the “Day of Terror” plot against New York City landmarks.

Isa Abdullah Ali

One of eight children from a Washington, D.C. African-American family, Cleven Raphael Holt dropped out of ninth grade in 1972, and as a 15-year-old lied about his age and joined the U.S. Army.¹⁷ Discharged from service after 18 months, Holt returned to Washington. After a dissolute period of minor criminality and odd jobs, Holt had a spiritual awakening and converted to Sunni Islam, adopting the name Isa Abdullah Ali.¹⁸

During the late 1970s, Abdullah Ali became caught up in Washington’s dissident Iranian Shi`a community fighting for the ouster of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.¹⁹ Abdullah Ali eventually abandoned Sunni Islam

Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in West Beirut, and served as a bodyguard to Hizb Allah’s spiritual leader, Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah.²² After being wounded in 1986, Abdullah returned to Washington and took a job as a groundskeeper at Howard University.²³

In 1995, he told friends that he would be traveling to Bosnia to help defend the country’s Muslim community.²⁴ The following year, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry described Abdullah as “a known American terrorist” suspected of posing a threat to NATO peacekeepers,²⁵ and guards at the Tuzla Air Base were warned to be on the lookout for him.²⁶ NATO forces, however, lacked the legal authority to detain Abdullah, and with no outstanding arrest warrants he was able to return to the United States and a life of relative obscurity.²⁷

Why Did They Join?

A full consideration of the motivating factors that underlay the entries into jihad described above is beyond the scope of this article. It is important, however, to note that as Andrew Silke suggests, “becoming a terrorist is for most people a gradual process.”²⁸ Although it is difficult to surmise what this process looks like for the majority of American Muslims who have chosen this path, Silke and Alan Krueger both suggest that a vast number of those who have chosen terrorism were young (teens to early 20s), married males who were well-educated professionals, had a strong Muslim identity, and who felt socially marginalized and experienced some form of discrimination.²⁹ This characterization, however, is not meant

to simplify the complex factors that lead individuals to choose terrorism. Indeed, some of the more recent homegrown cases in the United States have involved less educated, unmarried males who are from the middle-class and are more socially-integrated than their European counterparts.³⁰ Additionally, many of the more contemporary extremists in

“U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Yemen may also spur more U.S. Muslims to consider jihad than in the years prior to 9/11.”

the United States who have attempted to link up with international conflicts have often done so as members of small groups—such as the Lackawanna Six (2002), the “Virginia jihad” network (2003), and the five Virginia men convicted in a Pakistani court in June 2010 of terrorist offenses. This reality reflects Marc Sageman’s thesis that individuals are introduced to radical ideas largely through “loose networks” that include kinship or friendship ties often at places of worship or in private homes or gatherings.³¹ These closed networks are difficult to both penetrate and anticipate.³²

Before 9/11, however, American Muslims seeking jihad abroad appeared to do so most often as individuals—or “lone-wolf” jihadists. Although it is not clear why these “lone wolves” opted to seek jihad on their own rather than as part of a group, one explanation may be that although there were Islamic charities and other groups, such as the al-Kifah Refugee Center, that were organized to send American Muslims abroad to wage jihad, it may have been difficult

for Shi`ism, and after the 1979 Islamic revolution went to work as a security guard at the new Islamic republic’s Washington embassy.²⁰

In 1980, after a brief period with the mujahidin in Afghanistan, Abdullah traveled to Beirut, where he joined the Shi`a Amal militia.²¹ During the next six years, he reportedly trained militiamen, fought alongside the

17 Harry F. Rosenthal, “Profile of a Fugitive: ‘Very, Very Weird Story,’” Associated Press, January 24, 1996.

18 Tod Robberson, “The Unfinished Journey of Isa Abdullah Ali,” *Washington Post Magazine*, December 16, 1990.

19 Abdullah Ali was reportedly associated with David Belfield (also known as Daoud Salahuddin), an American supporter of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini later indicted for the July 1980 murder of Ali Tabatabai, an anti-Khomeini activist. See William Branigin, “US Sniper in Beirut,” *Washington Post*, July 28, 1982.

20 Ibid.

21 Brian Blomquist, “Terrorist’ Was a Regular in Adams Morgan Bar,” *Washington Times*, January 26, 1996.

22 Robberson; Edward D. Sargent, “DC Mother Told PLO Fighter Son Is Alive,” *Washington Post*, July 29, 1982.

23 Ibid.

24 Blomquist.

25 Ibid.

26 Tim Weiner, “NATO Forces Are Warned of US Extremist in Bosnia,” *New York Times*, January 24, 1996.

27 That said, he was the subject of a 2010 documentary, “American Jihadist.”

28 Andrew Silke, “Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalization,” *European Journal of Criminology* 5:1 (2008): p. 105.

29 Ibid., pp. 106-119; Alan B. Krueger, “What Makes a Homegrown Terrorist? Human Capital and Participation in Domestic Islamic Terrorist Groups in the USA,” *Economics Letters* 101:3 (2008): pp. 294-296.

30 Rick “Ozzie” Nelson, “Homegrown Terrorism Fact Sheet,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 22, 2010.

31 Daniel B. Kennedy, Robert J. Homant, and Erick Barnes, “An Insider View of the Sleeper Cell: A Face Validity Study,” *Journal of Applied Security Research* 3:3-4 (2008): p. 329.

32 Waqar Gillani and Sabrina Tavernise, “Pakistan Sentences Five Americans in Terror Case,” *New York Times*, June 24, 2010.

for these Muslims, many of whom may have felt alienated in their communities because of their race, religion or economic status, to identify peers who felt a similar pull toward radical Islam. To connect with others who shared their extremist views and thus relieve their sense of alienation, these Muslim Americans often sought out like-minded individuals at mosques, where they were encouraged by an imam to travel outside the United States to wage jihad.³³ Some may have chosen to travel abroad because joining a terrorist group is a punishable crime, and evading the authorities by leaving the country may have been their preferred option, especially for those with prior criminal records.³⁴

Potential terrorist recruits today have more opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals in the United States than prior to 9/11, and there is more ideological and possibly logistical support for conducting domestic terrorist attacks. In addition to a larger network of “facilitators” for would-be terrorists, unrestricted access to the internet has introduced many American jihadists to the extremist ideology that underpins terrorist violence. U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Yemen may also spur more U.S. Muslims to consider jihad than in the years prior to 9/11.³⁵

Conclusion

American Muslim extremists who journeyed to foreign fields of jihad during the 1980s and 1990s did so largely outside the gaze of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Although the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) suspected that hundreds if not thousands of people left the United States for conflicts abroad, a senior FBI counterterrorism official conceded in 2002 that “we didn’t understand the magnitude of what was going on here.”³⁶

Today, government scrutiny of Americans suspected of terrorist activities abroad is intense, as evidenced by the spate of prosecutions of U.S.

citizens accused of extremist activities in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and elsewhere. Yet nearly a decade into the “war on terrorism,” government officials, policy specialists and terrorism scholars still know relatively little about the participation of Americans in violent extremism abroad before 2001. Politicians and policymakers typically frame the issue of violent extremism among U.S. Muslims as a novel, essentially post-9/11 phenomenon.

Building on the handful of pre-9/11 cases and mining the experiences of a much broader set of individuals could identify factors—personal, social, logistical, and ideological—that facilitated entry into foreign jihad. Ideally, a more comprehensive understanding of journeys to jihad in the 1980s and 1990s would inform and improve current efforts by the U.S. government—and the American Muslim community itself—to prevent the involvement of U.S. Muslims in violent extremism overseas.

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Tensions Rise Between Hizb-i-Islami and the Taliban in Afghanistan

By Matthew DuPee and Anand Gopal

IN MARCH 2010, clashes erupted between two of Afghanistan’s most important insurgent groups in northern Baghlan Province. A days-long battle between Hizb-i-Islami¹ and the Taliban left nearly 60 militants and 20 civilians dead. Hostilities between the two sides flared again in Wardak Province in July, where ongoing clashes killed 28 Taliban fighters, including an important local Taliban commander.²

The skirmishes, sparked by the growing reach of the Taliban and turf battles between the two groups, mark a significant fissure in the country’s militant movement. This article provides a closer look at these frictions and at Afghan government and coalition efforts to exploit them.

Northern Expansion

The intra-insurgent tensions are rooted in the dynamics of northern Afghanistan, once peaceful areas that have experienced spiraling violence in recent years. Since 2007, high-level Taliban commanders have repeatedly threatened to expand the war into the largely passive and ethnically divided north, a sparsely populated area where the main forces were non-combat ready International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) units and local security groups. The Taliban’s initial strategy for the north was to slowly build up intelligence and support networks in

1 Hizb-i-Islami is one of the three largest insurgent groups in Afghanistan. A young Islamist named Gul-buddin Hekmatyar formed the political faction in Pakistan in 1976 in response to the growing influence of leftist movements in the Afghan government and university campuses. During the 1980s, Hekmatyar, along with guidance from Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence and financial assistance from U.S. and Saudi intelligence services, propelled Hizb-i-Islami into the biggest mujahidin organization fighting against the Soviet occupation. Hekmatyar is infamous for his brutal battlefield tactics and backstabbing political deals, including the assassination of many of his political rivals.

2 Hakim Basharat, “Taliban, HIA Fighting Over Territory in Maidan Wardak,” Pajhwok Afghan News, July 29, 2010; Hakim Basharat, “HIA Backers Kill Taliban Member in Wardak,” Pajhwok Afghan News, July 13, 2010.

33 Silke, p. 118.

34 Ibid., p. 117.

35 Nelson, “Homegrown Terrorism Fact Sheet.”

36 John Mintz, “For US, American Holy Warriors Hard to Track,” *Washington Post*, July 16, 2002.

the northwest and northeast.³ They were able to exploit local grievances, particularly those caused by corrupt, ineffective government and ethnic tensions between non-Pashtuns and Pashtuns. By 2008, insurgent leaders were issuing special decrees calling for more attacks in these regions, spawning a surge of anti-government activity that has since seriously destabilized parts of the north and west.⁴

In particular, the northern corridor linking Kabul to the Tajikistan border has increasingly come under tremendous pressure from anti-government forces, including the Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami. Both groups largely operated in separate areas, but occasional tactical level cooperation was reported, although suspicion and competition between both fronts remained the norm. Kunduz and Baghlan provinces, located about 155 miles from Kabul, have suffered the brunt of deadly insurgent attacks and increasing insecurity.⁵ The Taliban have built an extensive network in the region—there are now an estimated 300 to 600 “hard core” fighters, most of them local, and scores of foreign fighters—both sharp increases from 2007.⁶ In June, Baghlan’s provincial council chief Muhammad Rasoul Muhsini said that the Taliban

have established clandestine “military centers” in 11 of Baghlan’s districts and that only five of the remaining districts were under *de facto* government control (Barka, Tala Barfak, Farang, Khost and Dahan-i-Ghori).⁷

Alongside the Taliban, Hizb has traditionally maintained a significant presence in both provinces. Under the command of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a Pashtun originally from Kunduz (Imam Sahib district), Hizb easily reactivated parts of its northern networks from the anti-Soviet insurgency and consolidated party representation, albeit modestly, in Baghlan and Kunduz. The group also

“The region has strategic importance for both groups because of a key transit route that runs south from Tajikistan through Kunduz and Baghlan. The route provides fuel and other vital logistical supplies to NATO forces, making it a magnet for insurgent attacks.”

has fighters in the region around Kabul and in the provinces near the eastern Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The U.S. military has previously estimated Hizb’s overall forces to number around 400 to 600, although experts suggest that the number is more likely to total close to 1,500 full-time fighters.⁸ Despite such numbers, the Taliban have in recent years surpassed Hizb as the dominant insurgent force in the area.⁹ Today, the

7 Habib Rahman Sherzai, “All Districts in Baghlan May Fall into Taliban Hands,” Pajhwok Afghan News, June 14, 2010.

8 Giustozzi, p. 132. According to a Hizb commander, however, the group has 4,000 members in the northern regions alone, although this figure is likely exaggerated. See Najibullah Quraishi, “Behind Taliban Lines,” PBS Frontline, February 23, 2010.

9 Following the successful parliamentary elections in 2005, many Hizb commanders and cadres folded back into the community, creating a vacuum for the Taliban to eventually penetrate and establish a more aggressive and violent military campaign in the north.

Taliban are far more aggressive and militarily resilient, as measured by the number of attacks they initiate and the extent of territory under their control.¹⁰ The Taliban succeeded in marginalizing Hizb’s influence in the area by implementing heavy-handed terrorist attacks, especially targeting influential tribal leaders and former commanders. This resulted in a power vacuum that they were able to exploit.¹¹

The region has strategic importance for both groups because of a key transit route that runs south from Tajikistan through Kunduz and Baghlan. The route provides fuel and other vital logistical supplies to NATO forces, making it a magnet for insurgent attacks. Indeed, violence in the area surged as international forces began to rely heavily on the route. The route, however, also began to fuel tensions between insurgent groups. At stake was access to a trade corridor—a valuable source of income and power.¹² By late 2009, turf battles over key pieces of terrain, including fertile farming areas and key logistical hubs, exploded between Hizb and the Taliban.

Fissures in the Insurgency

The largest clash between the two groups was the March 7, 2010 incident in northern Baghlan, when Taliban fighters nearly overran Hizb positions, prompting Hizb commanders to contact Afghan government officials in search of military support. Ultimately, the feud ended with the Hizb fighters being expelled from their strongholds and the Taliban seizing sizeable portions of Dahan-i-Ghori and Baghlan-i-Jadid districts.¹³ Since that time, a number of other clashes have taken place, even outside of the northern area. For

10 Personal interview, Afghan security official, May 2010.

11 Several prominent anti-Taliban militia commanders have been killed recently by the Taliban in Kunduz, including Commander Selab, Commander Hassan and a Taliban defector named Commander Abdullah.

12 Successful insurgent attacks on convoys can bring monetary rewards from the leadership or build the prestige of the field commander involved in the incident. Moreover, companies organizing supply convoys sometimes pay “protection money” to insurgents to ensure safe passage. See, for example, Aryn Baker, “How Crime Pays for the Taliban,” *Time Magazine*, September 7, 2009.

13 For details, see Fabrizio Foschini, “Baghlan - Divided We Stand,” Afghanistan Analysts Network, July 7, 2010.

instance, in late June the two sides skirmished in Wardak Province, near Kabul.¹⁴ In July, these skirmishes led to full battles in Nirkh district, when Hizb fighters—who were locals and had a better understanding of the terrain—handed a defeat to Taliban forces who had come from surrounding districts. In response, the Taliban brought in reinforcements from other provinces, which Hizb matched by mobilizing Kuchis¹⁵ from Nangarhar Province.¹⁶ In

“Increasingly desperate, the government appears to be outsourcing security and intelligence networks to Hizb-i-Islami to prevent the Taliban from gaining more territory, while at the same time Hizb-i-Islami is siding with the government to prevent further erosion of its influence from Taliban intrusions.”

late July, the combined Hizb-Kuchi force routed the Taliban and killed a number of their commanders, prompting the Taliban’s Quetta *shura* to send a commission to the district to assess the reasons behind their losses.¹⁷

In another instance, Hizb-aligned elders took control of parts of Nuristan Province in the country’s northeast after U.S. forces withdrew from the area in 2009, sparking further clashes with the Taliban.¹⁸ Taliban fighters have also assassinated key Hizb-aligned officials in recent months, the most prominent of whom was Maulavi Gul Rahman, a famous commander under

Hekmatyar during the anti-Soviet insurgency.¹⁹

In some cases, Taliban fighters see Hizb-i-Islami as ineffective or disapprove of their contacts with the Afghan government. Qari Ziaur Rahman, a prominent Taliban commander active on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border near Kunar, recently dismissed the group. “Hizb has not been effective in the last eight years,” he said. “They haven’t had any major successes in these years.”²⁰

Afghan and Western officials have made moves in an attempt to take advantage of these strains. A key element of their strategy is to convince rank-and-file Hizb fighters to leave the insurgency and form pro-government militias as a bulwark against Taliban activity. In other cases, they are attempting to adroitly exploit local dynamics. For instance, in a political move that largely escaped media attention, Afghan President Hamid Karzai appointed Hajji Abdul Munshi Majeed, the long-standing governor of Badakhshan Province, as Baghlan’s new governor in May 2010. Majeed is a Pashtun from Baghlan and reportedly has longstanding ties to Hizb-i-Islami. In fact, one group of analysts even contends that he is involved in “consolidating the party and reviving its communications network across the country.”²¹ This move also highlights the seriousness in which the government views the increase in Taliban activities and consolidation in the northern districts of Kunduz and Baghlan. Increasingly desperate, the government appears to be outsourcing security and intelligence networks to Hizb-i-Islami to prevent the Taliban from gaining more territory, while at the same time Hizb-i-Islami is siding with the government to prevent further erosion of its influence from Taliban intrusions.

With Majeed now acting as the governor of Baghlan, relations between the two groups are likely to strain further.²² Moreover, his appointment coincides with a push to eliminate the Taliban leadership in the province. According to NATO statements, joint Afghan and ISAF operations have “removed three successively appointed Taliban provincial shadow governors for the province.”²³ On May 14, Mullah Rohullah was killed along with his entourage, including his deputy, and his replacement, Maluvi Jabbar, was killed along with two Taliban military commanders (Mullah Haji Muhamood and Mullah Kajoor) on May 28.²⁴ Only three days later, the newly installed Taliban governor for Baghlan was also arrested. The events marked one of the biggest losses of provincial-level leadership for the Taliban anywhere in the country. Officials say that this is partly due to Hizb providing information to Afghan forces. “Intelligence comes from the armed forces of Hizb-i-Islami,” said a senior Afghan provincial official in July. “We buy information from the fighters.”²⁵ More than 50 Hizb fighters are being kept in a government safe house in Baghlan, also a likely source of intelligence for coalition forces.²⁶

In addition to the friction among insurgents at the local level, Afghan and U.S. officials have modified their stance toward engaging some of the insurgent leadership. For instance, the United States has publicly released several high-value Hizb associates beginning in 2008, including Dr. Ghairat Baheer, Hekmatyar’s son-in-law and top public relations figure, who was apprehended and held in custody since 2002.²⁷ Abdullah Shahab,

14 Hakim Basharat, “Three Injured as Taliban, Hizb Clash in Wardak,” Pajhwok Afghan News, June 27, 2010.

15 Kuchis are a nomadic, pastoralist culture in Afghanistan.

16 Personal interview, UN official, Kabul, August 2010.

17 Personal interview, Taliban commander for Wardak Province, Kabul, August 2010.

18 Personal interview, Afghan official from Nuristan, May 2010.

19 “Afghan Peace Cleric Rahman Gul Shot Dead in Kunar,” BBC, May 17, 2010.

20 Anand Gopal, “Afghanistan Warlord Hekmatyar Shuns Peace Jirga but Offers His Own Deal,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 2, 2010.

21 Cole Hansen, Christian Dennys and Idrees Zaman, “Conflict Analysis: Baharak District, Badakhshan Province,” Cooperation for Peace and Unity, February 2009.

Also see David Isby, “Trojan Horse or Genuine Schism? The Hizb-i Islami Split,” *Terrorism Monitor* 2:11 (2004).

22 Strictly speaking, Majeed belongs to the legal wing of Hizb-i-Islami, which has officially repudiated Hekmatyar and abides by the Afghan constitution. Many observers, however, agree that there remain deep links between some officials in the legal Hizb-i-Islami and Hekmatyar’s wing.

23 “IJC Operational Update, June 22,” ISAF joint command statement, June 22, 2010.

24 Bill Roggio, “Newly Minted Shadow Governor Captured,” *The Long War Journal*, June 3, 2010.

25 Hamid Shalizi and Jonathon Burch, “Afghan Insurgents Supplying Taliban Intel to NATO—Officials,” Reuters, July 8, 2010.

26 Ibid.

27 Baheer was also given a visa to travel to London by British authorities in January 2009. For details, see “Se-

Hekmatyar's nephew, was captured and held by U.S. forces since 2005 before his unexpected release in July 2009.²⁸ More generally, the United Nations has approved measures to ease some of the financial restrictions of those linked to the insurgency (but not to al-Qa`ida) and to review all detainees in Afghan, U.S. and NATO custody.

From Hizb's side, representatives of its military committee reached out to the Afghan government as early as 2008.²⁹ That year a group of lawmakers who once had ties to Hekmatyar met with Hizb representatives in Peshawar, while Hekmatyar himself sent conciliatory

"If handled correctly, the developments could be a step toward de-escalation of hostilities, where some rank-and-file insurgents abandon the fight and the violence mitigates in some parts of the country."

messages to Afghan President Hamid Karzai that spring.³⁰ In February 2010, this group hosted a second meeting in the Maldives, featuring a number of Hizb-linked clerics and unofficial representatives. The two sides agreed to explore ways to bring all parties to the negotiating table. At the same time, a group of Hizb figures, such as Hekmatyar deputy Qutbuddin Hilal and U.S. representative Daoud Abedi, began to open dialogue with U.S. and Afghan officials. These various moves culminated in an official Hizb delegation to Kabul, where Hilal, Baheer and other representatives met with President Karzai and former Northern Alliance

creet Talks with Taliban Under Way," *al-Jazeera*, February 27, 2009; Syed Saleem Shahzad, "A Struggle Between War and Peace," *Asia Times Online*, June 3, 2008.

²⁸ *Wrazpanra Weesa*, July 29, 2009.

²⁹ This interaction refers to the insurgent component of Hekmatyar's military committee. A political bloc of former Hizb-i-Islami commanders and political leaders broke away from the central Hizb party led by Hekmatyar and became a legally registered party and participated successfully in the 2005 parliamentary elections.

³⁰ Personal interview, Afghan officials, April 2008.

and Taliban figures on March 18. The group delivered a 15-point peace proposal, which included a call for elections in return for a timetable for the withdrawal of troops. Hekmatyar said that the overture was prompted by the Obama administration's admission that the war could not be won solely through military means.³¹

Nevertheless, Hekmatyar and his senior military leadership appear to be seeking to negotiate from a position of weakness, as their base in the north erodes with the Taliban's advance. The defense of their stronghold in Nirkh in Wardak, however, shows that their capitulation is far from certain, and the dynamic of tensions with the Taliban while reaching out to the government is likely to continue for some time.

Conclusion

Given Hekmatyar's insistence on a troop withdrawal, the U.S. and Afghan governments are unlikely to strike a deal with him soon. Moreover, the peace overtures raise the question of what Hekmatyar's role will be in any post-agreement government, a deeply controversial issue. Nonetheless, if handled correctly the developments could be a step toward de-escalation of hostilities, where some rank-and-file insurgents abandon the fight and the violence mitigates in some parts of the country. Moreover, the approaches between the two sides could change the dynamic on the battlefield, giving much needed space for international forces to isolate the Taliban in the northern provinces. On the political front, Hizb-i-Islami has even attempted to portray itself as a force that can act as a bridge between Washington and the Taliban—a senior Hizb representative met with U.S. State Department officials in 2009 and then traveled to Quetta to meet the Taliban leadership in an attempt to foster dialogue.³² On the other hand, Hizb-i-Islami has little influence over the Taliban movement, and this specific meeting did not lead to an opening of dialogue among the three sides.

³¹ Anand Gopal, "Interview with Afghan Warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar: Can Peace Talks Succeed?" *Christian Science Monitor*, June 9, 2010.

³² Personal interview, senior Hizb-i-Islami representative, February 2010.

Peeling away rank-and-file Hizb fighters, or even striking a deal with the leadership, will not end the war—the problem of the Taliban and other insurgent groups such as the Haqqani network would remain major issues. Moreover, it is possible that some Hizb fighters could simply switch allegiances and fight under the Taliban's banner, and past atrocities attributed to Hekmatyar and Hizb commanders will not quickly be forgotten.³³ Yet if such moves open the door to more nuanced and varied approaches to the insurgency, it could augur well for an eventual approach to a political solution to the conflict.

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³³ Commanders and fighters are organized by the *andival* network, which is based on personal ties between fighters and commanders. This means a wholesale transfer from Hizb to the Taliban is not likely, as it would mean breaking longstanding ties. Yet, it remains a possibility for some commanders.

Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

July 1, 2010 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled that government prosecutors must present evidence that an Algerian national, who has been held at Guantanamo Bay for more than eight years, was truly an al-Qa`ida member, otherwise he must be released. According to the Associated Press, the decision "has broad implications for the credibility of evidence the administration of President Barack Obama has presented to justify holding terror suspects without trial." - *AFP, July 3*

July 1, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Two suicide bombers targeted the shrine of Data Ganj Baksh in Lahore, the capital of Punjab Province. The bombs killed at least 41 people. The site is considered Pakistan's most important Sufi shrine. The Pakistani Taliban, however, publicly denied responsibility for the attack. - *CBS News, July 1; New York Times, July 1*

July 1, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemeni Political Security officer Saleh Amtheeb was assassinated in Zinjibar, Abyan Province. Authorities later apprehended four suspects, two of whom were al-Qa`ida members. - *Saba, July 3; AFP, July 3*

July 1, 2010 (SOMALIA): Somali and African Union troops launched an offensive against al-Shabab insurgents in Mogadishu. The insurgents have vowed to topple the government. - *Wall Street Journal, July 2*

July 1, 2010 (THAILAND): Muslim separatists killed five people in Narathiwat Province in southern Thailand. The fighters detonated a roadside bomb near a military vehicle and then opened fire. - *Voice of America, July 2*

July 2, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters, including multiple suicide bombers, stormed the compound of a U.S. aid group in Kunduz Province, killing at least two expatriate workers, a security guard and an Afghan police officer. All six of the Taliban assailants died in the

attack. The killed expatriate workers were from Germany and the United Kingdom. - *Los Angeles Times, July 3; Australian Broadcasting Corporation, July 2*

July 2, 2010 (THAILAND): A roadside bomb killed three Thai soldiers in Yala Province in southern Thailand. - *Voice of America, July 2*

July 3, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Taliban fighters attacked a checkpoint in Upper Orakzai, located in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Security forces retaliated, killing four Taliban fighters. - *Daily Times, July 4*

July 4, 2010 (GERMANY): German police arrested a 24-year-old Syrian man, identified as Hussam S., who is accused of recruiting for al-Qa`ida on the internet. He is also suspected of operating a German-language internet forum to distribute Islamist literature. The man was arrested in the southwestern town of Montabaur in Rhineland-Palatinate. - *Reuters, July 7*

July 4, 2010 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber killed at least four people in Ramadi, Anbar Province. The bomber, who wore an explosives vest, managed to slip through four checkpoints at the provincial governor's compound. She detonated her explosives outside Governor Qassim Mohammed Abid's office. The governor and his two deputies were not injured. - *Washington Post, July 4*

July 4, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani security forces reportedly killed a senior commander in the Pakistani Taliban, identified as Ameerullah Mehsud (also known as Qari Gud). The commander, who was killed in a shootout with soldiers in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, carried a \$234,000 bounty for his arrest or death. He is considered one of the founders of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. - *AFP, July 5; CNN, July 6*

July 5, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide squad of four militants attacked a paramilitary fort in Lower Dir District of the North-West Frontier Province. The militants, armed with car bombs and rockets, killed one soldier. All four of the fighters were killed. - *AFP, July 4*

July 5, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemeni soldiers and al-Qa`ida militants clashed in eastern Hadramawt Province. The militants killed two soldiers, while authorities apprehended two al-Qa`ida suspects. Another two al-Qa`ida suspects escaped. A third soldier later died of wounds sustained during the firefight. - *Reuters, July 5; Reuters, July 6*

July 5, 2010 (PHILIPPINES): Wu Xili, a Chinese shopkeeper held hostage by the Abu Sayyaf Group for nearly 19 months, was rescued by police. The rescue operation took place on Jolo Island in the southern Philippines. - *AFP, July 5*

July 7, 2010 (GLOBAL): Federal prosecutors in the United States revealed that the plot to bomb New York City's subway system, which was foiled in September 2009, was directly related to a similar plot in Manchester in the United Kingdom. The Manchester plot involves Abid Naseer and Tariq ur Rehman, who were arrested by UK authorities in April 2009. U.S. authorities also allege that three senior al-Qa`ida operatives—Adnan Shukrijumah, Salah al-Somali and Rashid Rauf—organized the New York subway plot, recruiting Najibullah Zazi and two other men to conduct the attack. - *Wall Street Journal, July 7*

July 7, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Sudanese national Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmoud al-Qosi pleaded guilty in a U.S. military court at Guantanamo Bay to conspiring with al-Qa`ida and providing material support to terrorism. Al-Qosi ran the kitchen and provided supplies at one of Usama bin Ladin's compounds in Afghanistan. He has been held at Guantanamo Bay for more than eight years. The terms of his plea agreement were not disclosed. - *Washington Post, July 8*

July 7, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Gunmen shot to death Mohammad Gul, director of the intelligence department of Kabul's counter-crime police branch. One of his bodyguards was also killed. - *AFP, July 8*

July 7, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed at least 28 people in northern Baghdad. The bomber targeted Shi'a pilgrims en route to the Imam Musa

al-Kadhim mosque for a major festival. – *RadioFreeEurope/Radio Liberty, July 7; New York Times, July 7*

July 7, 2010 (YEMEN): A Yemeni court sentenced two al-Qa`ida members to death for their role in killing military and security officials. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, “The two men sentenced Wednesday were found guilty of ambushing and looting a military truck carrying weapons and of killing three soldiers, a policeman and a civilian during the subsequent pursuit in July 2009. The prosecution said they also attacked a convoy that killed two high-ranking police officials, including the director of political security, in November [2009].” They were identified as Mansour Daleel, who is 18-years-old, and Mubarak al-Shabwani, who is 23-years-old. – *Wall Street Journal, July 8*

July 8, 2010 (UNITED KINGDOM): A court convicted three Britons of plotting to kill hundreds of people in suicide bombings after being recruited by an al-Qa`ida-inspired cell. The men—Ibrahim Savant, Arafat Waheed Khan and Waheed Zaman—were part of the 2006 transatlantic aircraft plot that involved liquid explosives. According to Reuters, “Their conviction follows one of Britain’s biggest counter-terrorism investigations and a series of trials around a plot that prosecutors said could have been on the same scale as the 9/11 attacks.” On July 12, the men were sentenced to life in prison. – *Reuters, July 8; BBC, July 12*

July 8, 2010 (NORWAY): Authorities arrested three al-Qa`ida suspects in Norway and Germany, accused of planning terrorist attacks in Norway. The men arrested in Norway were identified as Mikael Davud, a 39-year-old ethnic Uighur with Norwegian citizenship, and David Jakobsen, a 31-year-old Uzbek with legal residency in Norway. The third man, who was arrested in Germany, was identified as Shawan Sadek Saeed Bujak, a 37-year-old Iraqi-Kurd who was on holiday in Duisburg. The plot is reportedly linked to the September 2009 New York City subway plot, as well as the April 2009 terrorist plot in Manchester in the United Kingdom. – *Voice of America, July 8; Reuters, July 13*

July 9, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber in a vehicle attacked an Iraqi Army checkpoint in western Baghdad, killing five people. Three of the dead were soldiers. – *CNN, July 9; BBC, July 9*

July 9, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a group of tribal elders in the administrative center of Mohmand Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. More than 100 people were killed. The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility. – *New York Times, July 9; Dawn, July 10*

July 9, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Taliban fighters attacked an army patrol in Makeen district of South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Three soldiers were killed. – *AFP, July 10*

July 10, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Insurgents overran a police checkpoint in Emam Saheb district of Kunduz Province, killing nine policemen. – *Reuters, July 11*

July 10, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A bomb killed the head of the police department in Qaleh Zaal district of Kunduz Province. – *Reuters, July 11*

July 10, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Five policemen were killed after hitting a roadside bomb in Badakhshan Province. – *Reuters, July 11*

July 11, 2010 (UGANDA): Two suicide bombers attacked crowds gathered to watch the World Cup final in Kampala, the capital of Uganda. The bombings, which were claimed by the al-Shabab militant group in Somalia, killed approximately 76 people. One attack targeted a rugby club filled with soccer fans, while the other bomber targeted a popular Ethiopian restaurant. At least one American was killed in the attacks. – *ABC News, July 11; Washington Post, July 13*

July 11, 2010 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) threatened to execute a French hostage in 15 days if the French government failed to meet its demands. The hostage has been identified as 78-year-old Michel Germaneau, who was seized in northern Niger in April. – *Reuters, July 11*

July 11, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani fighter jets and helicopter gunships attacked Taliban positions in Orakzai Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Authorities allege that 22 Taliban fighters were killed in the strikes. – *RTTNews, July 12*

July 11, 2010 (YEMEN): Security forces arrested eight suspected al-Qa`ida fighters, including a Saudi fugitive, accused of plotting attacks against security facilities in Yemen. – *al-Jazira, July 11*

July 12, 2010 (RUSSIA): Russian security officials announced that they broke up a terrorist cell that was preparing female suicide bombers for attacks on major Russian cities. Authorities arrested six women, who had apparently already written “farewell letters” in anticipation of their impending attacks. The women were detained in the Muslim region of Dagestan. – *New York Times, July 12*

July 12, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): According to a senior Afghan official, President Hamid Karzai is seeking the removal of 50 former Taliban officials from a UN terrorism blacklist with the goal of advancing political reconciliation talks with Taliban insurgents. – *Washington Post, July 12*

July 12, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): The Afghan Defense Ministry said that 80% of Taliban bombs are made with ammonium nitrate and potassium nitrate fertilizer. Before 2007, however, most bombs were constructed from ordnance leftover from the Soviet occupation of the country in the 1980s. – *AFP, July 12*

July 13, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters attacked a police unit headquarters in Kandahar city, killing three U.S. soldiers, five civilian Afghan employees and one Afghan policeman. As part of the attack, a suicide bomber in a vehicle detonated his explosives at the entrance to the Afghan National Civil Order Police. Immediately after, Taliban militants fired rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns at the facility. – *Christian Science Monitor, July 14*

July 13, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani police arrested 650 suspected militants in the North-West Frontier Province in response to the July 9 suicide attack that killed more than 100 people in Mohmand Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The arrests took place in a three-day period. - *AFP, July 13*

July 13, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants blew up a government-run middle school for boys in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *Daily Times, July 14*

July 14, 2010 (UNITED STATES): A video surfaced of Faisal Shahzad, who attempted to detonate a car bomb in New York City's Times Square on May 1, describing his planned bombing as a "revenge attack." In the video, Shahzad, who is in U.S. custody, dedicated his planned attack to Baitullah Mehsud and Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, both of whom were killed by the United States. The video appears to have been filmed in Pakistan, and Shahzad is seen shaking hands with Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan leader Hakimullah Mehsud. - *AOL News, July 14; Christian Science Monitor, July 15*

July 14, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): The Afghan government approved a program to establish local defense forces in the country. The program is similar to the Awakening Councils created by General David Petraeus in Iraq. According to the *New York Times*, "...the two programs would not be identical. Unlike the Iraqi units, the Afghan forces would not be composed of insurgents who had switched sides. They would be similar as a lightly armed, trained and, significantly, paid force in a nation starving for jobs." - *New York Times, July 14*

July 14, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb killed four U.S. soldiers in southern Afghanistan. - *Christian Science Monitor, July 14*

July 14, 2010 (INDIA): India's home secretary argued that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence was behind the November 2008 Mumbai attacks, in collaboration with Lashkar-i-Tayyiba. "The ISI has had a much more significant role to play (in the Mumbai attacks)," the official said. "It was

not just a peripheral role. They were literally controlling and coordinating it (the attacks) from the beginning till the end." According to Reuters, "His accusations are the strongest comments made by Indian officials since the attacks which brought the South Asian nuclear neighbours to the brink of war." - *Reuters, July 14*

July 14, 2010 (YEMEN): Approximately 20 suspected al-Qa`ida fighters attacked a Yemeni intelligence agency in Zinjibar, located in Abyan Province. A policeman and two militants were killed in the incident. - *Bloomberg, July 14*

July 15, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): NATO forces killed Mullah Akhtar, identified as a Taliban commander responsible for bringing foreign fighters from Iran into Afghanistan. He was killed in Farah Province. - *CNN, July 16*

July 15, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. aerial drone killed at least two people in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *USA Today, July 15*

July 15, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a bus stop in Mingora, the main town of Swat District of the North-West Frontier Province. Five people were killed. Authorities believe that the bomber tried to target a security force convoy. - *BBC, July 15; Reuters, July 15*

July 15, 2010 (IRAN): Two suicide bombers detonated their explosives at a Shi`a mosque in Zahedan, located in Sistan-Baluchistan Province in southeastern Iran. The explosions killed at least 26 people at the Jamia mosque. The Sunni rebel group Jundallah reportedly claimed credit for the bombings, saying it was revenge for Iran's execution of the group's leader, Abdulmalek Rigi, on June 20. - *BBC, July 16; AFP, July 15; New York Times, July 16*

July 16, 2010 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. Treasury Department blacklisted Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-`Awlaqi, identifying him as a "specially designated global terrorist." - *Reuters, July 16*

July 16, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A bomb ripped through a used car market in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing six people. - *BBC, July 16*

July 17, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Gunmen shot to death 16 Shi`a Muslims in the Sunni-dominated Charkhel area of Kurram Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The victims were ambushed as they headed to Peshawar in two passenger vehicles. - *AFP, July 17*

July 17, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Two bombs exploded at a congested market in Lahore, the capital of Punjab Province, killing six people. Both bombs struck internet cafes. - *AFP, July 17*

July 18, 2010 (GLOBAL): A senior U.S. law enforcement official told CNN that the author of the new online al-Qa`ida magazine, *Inspire*, may be U.S. citizen Samir Khan, who previously lived in North Carolina and left for Yemen in October 2009. Khan, who is 23-years-old, has previously been involved in radical Islamist blogs, and he once lived in the New York area. - *CNN, July 18*

July 18, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed three people near a market in eastern Kabul. - *RTTNews, July 18; Washington Post, July 19*

July 18, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters blew up the gate to a jail and freed 23 insurgents in Farah Province. - *Reuters, July 18*

July 18, 2010 (IRAQ): Two suicide bombers killed at least 50 people in southwestern Baghdad. The bombers targeted members of a government-backed Sunni militia who were waiting to receive their paychecks outside a military base. - *BBC, July 18; Los Angeles Times, July 19*

July 18, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a Shi`a mosque in Sargodha, Punjab Province, wounding at least 15 people. - *Reuters, July 18*

July 19, 2010 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri purportedly released a new audio message, promising al-Qa`ida's followers victory in Afghanistan

and Iraq. Al-Zawahiri also said that the battle to liberate Jerusalem will eventually occur. - *CNN, July 20*

July 19, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a convoy of armored SUVs in Mosul, Ninawa Province, killing one British security contractor. - *Guardian, July 19*

July 20, 2010 (GLOBAL): The United Nations blacklisted Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, identifying him as an al-Qa`ida operative. - *Reuters, July 20*

July 20, 2010 (UNITED KINGDOM): Eliza Manningham-Buller, the former head of MI5, harshly criticized the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, saying "we gave Osama bin Laden his Iraqi jihad, so that he was able to move into Iraq in a way that he was not before." Manningham-Buller, who was the head of MI5 from 2002-2007, also said, "Our involvement in Iraq radicalized, for want of a better word, a whole generation of young people—not a whole generation, a few among a generation—who saw our involvement in Iraq, on top of our involvement in Afghanistan, as being an attack on Islam." - *Christian Science Monitor, July 21*

July 20, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters beheaded six Afghan police officers in Baghlan Province. The Taliban denied that they beheaded the officers. - *al-Jazeera, July 21; AFP, July 21*

July 20, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Five militants attacked a military training center in Mardan, located in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. As the fighters tried to enter the training facility, security forces opened fire, killing all five assailants. Three of the fighters wore suicide bomb vests. Four soldiers were wounded. - *AFP, July 19*

July 21, 2010 (UNITED STATES): U.S. authorities arrested Zachary Adam Chesser on charges of providing support to the al-Shabab terrorist group in Somalia. Chesser, who is from Fairfax County, Virginia, was turned away from a July 10 flight out of New York's John F. Kennedy airport after he was told he was on a "no-fly" list. Chesser, who is 20-years-old, also reportedly told federal agents that he

twice attempted to travel to Somalia to join al-Shabab. - *Bloomberg, July 21*

July 21, 2010 (MAURITANIA): A Mauritanian court sentenced Omar Sid'Ahmed Ould Hamma to 12 years in jail for kidnapping three Spanish aid workers and handing them over to al-Qa`ida. Hamma, a Malian national, was arrested by Mauritanian security forces in February. - *AFP, July 21*

July 21, 2010 (PHILIPPINES): U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns announced that U.S. troops will remain in the southern Philippines to help local security forces in their fight against Muslim extremists. According to Agence France-Presse, "About 500 US Special Forces troops train Filipino soldiers in Mindanao to combat militants from the Al-Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf group, which the United States lists as a terrorist organisation." - *AFP, July 21*

July 22, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Two U.S. soldiers were killed in a helicopter crash in Helmand Province. NATO forces are investigating the cause of the crash, while the Taliban said they shot down the aircraft. - *Los Angeles Times, July 23*

July 22, 2010 (SOMALIA): Somali officials admitted that members of the country's elite presidential guard had defected to the al-Shabab insurgent group. - *New York Times, July 22*

July 22, 2010 (MAURITANIA): Mauritanian commandos supported by the French military launched a raid on fighters belonging to al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The soldiers killed six AQIM members, while four militants managed to escape. Reports suggested that the goal of the operation was to free a 78-year-old French hostage, Michel Germaneau, a retired engineer who was kidnapped in neighboring Niger in April. Germaneau, however, was not found. - *Washington Post, July 23; AFP, July 22*

July 23, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Reports said that two U.S. soldiers were captured by Taliban fighters in Logar Province. Later, however, both soldiers were found dead. One of the soldiers appears to have been

killed in the initial firefight. It was not immediately clear if the second soldier died from wounds sustained during the initial firefight, or if he was executed by Taliban fighters. - *Los Angeles Times, July 30*

July 24, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb killed four U.S. soldiers in southern Afghanistan. - *BBC, July 24*

July 24, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. aerial drone killed at least 16 militants in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *BBC, July 24*

July 24, 2010 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) executed French national Michel Germaneau in revenge for the July 22 failed rescue raid by French and Mauritanian troops. - *BBC, July 26*

July 25, 2010 (IRAQ): New reports suggest that the Iraqi military arrested the minister of defense for the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), who has been identified as Saleem Khalid al-Zawbayi. Two other senior ISI leaders were also reportedly arrested. - *Bloomberg, July 25*

July 25, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. aerial drone strike left 10 suspected militants dead in the Shaktoi area of South Waziristan Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *BBC, July 26*

July 25, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. aerial drone strike killed four suspected militants in Srarogha, located in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *BBC, July 26*

July 25, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. aerial drone killed five suspected militants in Tabbi Tolkhel, located in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *BBC, July 26*

July 25, 2010 (YEMEN): Al-Qa`ida fighters killed six Yemeni troops in Shabwa Province. - *CNN, July 26*

July 25, 2010 (ALGERIA): A suicide bomber in a vehicle attacked members of the Algerian National Gendarmerie in Tizi Ouzou, killing one person.

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb later claimed credit for the attack. - *al-Bawaba, July 25; AFP, July 29*

July 26, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber in a vehicle attacked the Baghdad offices of al-Arabiya television, killing four people. The Islamic State of Iraq later took credit for the attack. - *AFP, July 28*

July 26, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted a group of people mourning the death of a cabinet minister's son who was murdered in a suspected Taliban attack. The suicide blast killed seven people. It occurred near Peshawar. - *BBC, July 26*

July 27, 2010 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri purportedly released a new audiotape, threatening more attacks in the United States and in the West. "Oh American people...We offered you a peace plan, and mutual benefit; but your governments were proud and haughty, and so the attacks against you followed one after another, everywhere—from Indonesia to Times Square, by way of Madrid and London," the voice said. "And the attacks are ongoing, and more will come one after another." - *ABC News, July 27*

July 27, 2010 (FRANCE): French Prime Minister Francois Fillon reacted to the recent execution of French hostage Michel Germaneau by al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb, stating that France is "at war with al-Qa`ida." French President Nicolas Sarkozy vowed that the murder "will not go unpunished." - *Christian Science Monitor, July 27*

July 28, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Madhatta Haipe, a Philippine citizen who was a founding member of the al-Qa`ida-linked Abu Sayyaf Group, pled guilty in a U.S. court to the 1995 kidnappings of 16 people, including four U.S. citizens. Haipe was extradited to the United States in 2009. - *AFP, July 28*

July 28, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A bomb ripped through a crowded bus in Nimroz Province, killing 25 civilians on board. - *Los Angeles Times, July 28*

July 29, 2010 (IRAQ): Gunmen launched a coordinated attack on Iraqi soldiers in a predominately Sunni Baghdad neighborhood, killing at least six of them. The gunmen also briefly erected the flag of the insurgent group al-Qa`ida in Iraq near the destroyed army checkpoint. - *Washington Post, July 30*

July 29, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A new poll released by the Pew Research Center showed that nearly six in 10 Pakistanis described the United States as an enemy, and only one in 10 called it a partner. - *AP, July 29*

July 30, 2010 (GLOBAL): The United Nations removed five members of the Taliban from its sanctions blacklist. According to Voice of America, "Afghan President Hamid Karzai had been calling for the removal of at least 10 former Taliban members from the blacklist, as part of a reintegration plan for Taliban fighters willing to lay down their weapons." Two of those removed from the list are deceased. - *Voice of America, July 30*

July 30, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A bomb attached to a motorcycle exploded in Kandahar, killing a woman and a child. The target of the attack was a candidate in the country's upcoming parliamentary elections, yet the candidate was unharmed. - *News24.com, July 30*

July 31, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed a former militia commander who supported the Afghan government, in addition to two other people, in northern Afghanistan's Kunduz Province. - *AP, July 31*

July 31, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): At least 66 U.S. troops died in Afghanistan in July, making it the deadliest month for American forces in the country since the intervention began in 2001. As stated by the *Guardian*, "US and NATO commanders had warned that casualties would rise as the international military force ramped up the war against the Taliban, especially in the organisation's southern strongholds in Helmand and Kandahar provinces." - *Guardian, July 30; AP, July 31*